

PlayStation 2 SPECIAL EDITION 2002

OCTOBER 2002 / BUYERS GUIDE / EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT PLAYSTATION 2 / EVERY PS2 GAME REVIEWED (THAT'S ALL 322 OF 'EM!) / PREVIEWS OF ALL THE MUST-HAVE GAMES ARRIVING IN 2003 / A COMPLETE GUIDE TO PS2'S PAST, PRESENT & FUTURE / THE 50 DVDS YOU NEED TO OWN / AND LOADS MORE!

A SPECIAL EDITION FROM THE MAKERS OF PlayStation 2 OFFICIAL MAGAZINE-UK

THE UK'S BESTSELLING PLAYSTATION 2 MAGAZINE



PlayStation®2

SPECIAL EDITION: BUYERS GUIDE

THE ULTIMATE PLAYSTATION®2 GUIDE

INSIDE ■ EVERY PLAYSTATION 2 GAME REVIEWED (THAT'S ALL 322 OF 'EM!)
■ PREVIEWS OF ALL THE MUST-HAVE GAMES COMING TO PS2!
■ THE 50 DVDS YOU NEED TO OWN AND TONS MORE!



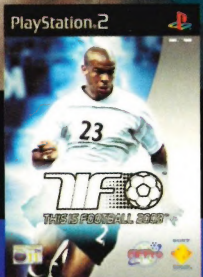
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PlayStation 2
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PlayStation®2

SPECIAL EDITION: BUYERS GUIDE

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Future Games: The First Choice For Gamers

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PlayStation®2

SPECIAL EDITION: BUYERS GUIDE



EDITOR'S LETTER

Just as I'm desperately trying to think of something to
write in this introduction so I can finish the mag, go
home and get some kip, the news has come through
that PlayStation 2 has now sold 40 million units
worldwide. That's a lot of consoles. It's also a lot of PS2
owners and a sure sign that the current 322 games on the
shelves will be joined by hundreds and hundreds more.

Trouble is, things move so quickly in the crazy world of
videogames it can be difficult to keep up with current events. PS2
going online you say? An Eye Toy that enables you to put yourself in
a game? Ratchet and Clank is just an innocent platform game and
not some deviant new form of sado-masochism? With all this going
on it's easy to get confused. And that's where we come in.

Whether you're a new PlayStation 2 owner looking to find out all
the basics about that exciting machine under the telly, or a PS2
veteran interested in the origins of the console and how to get the
most out of its audio-visual capabilities, our PS2 Uncovered feature
(pages 12-23) reveals everything you need to know about the past,
present and future of Sony's black box.

And how about which games to buy? With 322 titles to choose
from, even the most dedicated OPS2 reader would be forgiven for
feeling a little overwhelmed. So we've split those 322 games into 11
categories and reviewed every single one of 'em. Fancy some
hardcore blasting action? Then turn to the shoot-'em-up section
(page 46) and read about every Uzi-wielding nutter on PS2. Looking
to stick one in the onion bag from 20 yards? Simply check out the
sports games round-up (pages 102-113) and take our advice on
which footy game to buy. We're here to ensure that no unfortunate
PS2 owner ever leaves a shop with a donkey like *International
League Soccer* when the glorious *Pro Evolution Soccer* is just
waiting to be discovered.

Add to all this a huge previews-fest of the Top 40 games coming
to PS2 (including the likes of *Grand Theft Auto: Vice City*, *Soul
Calibur 2* and *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 4*); our gorgeous DVD which
lets you play 13 of the best PlayStation 2 games; plus our beret-
wearing, Gitanes-smoking, film-buffed countdown of the fifty DVDs
you must own, and this really is the ultimate Buyers Guide. Now, if
only Fergie would listen to my advice about his transfer dealings
we'd be laughing.

Lee

LEE HART
Editor

**"We're here to ensure
that no PS2 owner
buys a donkey like
*International League
Soccer* when the
glorious *Pro Evolution
Soccer* is just waiting
to be discovered"**

ART EDITOR

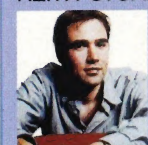
ALVIN WEETMAN



Cornishman Alv is a devoted fan of
all pastry products and would,
literally, kill for a Pasty Buyers Guide.
Whether this tome would see fit to
mention his own Weetman Pasty -
filled with potato chunks, beef
torpedoes, lager and his own
'special' sauce - is another matter...

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KEITH STUART



Currently embroiled in a battle to
demolish his godawful '80s fireplace,
Keith is in dire need of a D.I.Y Guide.
Smacking it with a mallet has so far
failed to bring the mutha down.
Course, he only wants rid of it so
he'll have somewhere to store all his
Britney Spears memorabilia.

JEZ BRIDGEMAN



Having got his missus up the duff,
Jez could do with a Guide To
Fatherhood. Although, he should be
used to the stinking bodily
functions, ear-splitting bawling,
senseless gibbering and the
constant demand for attention
after working with us lot.

SIMON MIDDLEWEEK



Unfortunately, Simon's well-earned
holiday in Spain has gone horribly
awry and he's currently being held
prisoner in Seville's Blue Paella
Club. If only we hadn't told him
that Chatting Up Spanish Men
Phrasebook™ was actually a
Restaurant Guide...

REVIEWS

RACING GAMES



PAGE 34-45

RACING GAMES

Reviews of every speed freak on PS2, from the pure driving thrills of *Gran Turismo 3* to the hovercar battles of *WipeOut Fusion*.

SHOOT-'EM-UPS

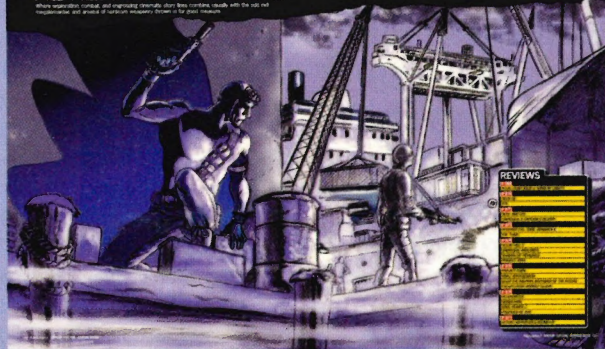


PAGE 46-56

SHOOT-'EM-UPS

Pick up an Uzi, take aim and blast the hell out of *TimeSplitters 2*, *Medal Of Honor: Frontline* and the rest of PS2's shoot-'em-up arsenal.

ACTION/ADVENTURES



PAGE 66-77

ACTION/ADVENTURES

Metal Gear Solid 2, *Deus Ex* and all the other games where combat exploration and cinematic stories combine to action-packed effect.

PLATFORM GAMES



PAGE 78-83

PLATFORM GAMES

Jak & Daxter and the rest of PS2's cartoon capers.

ROLE-PLAYING GAMES

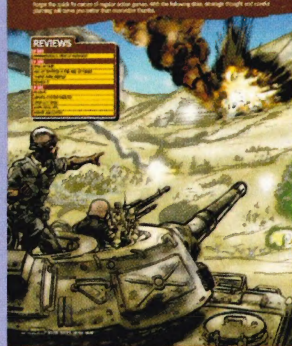


PAGE 84-89

ROLE-PLAYING GAMES

Final Fantasy X heads up the magical world of the RPG.

STRATEGY GAMES



PAGE 98-101

STRATEGY GAMES

Bring the grey matter into play with *Commandos 2* and co.

SPORTS GAMES



PAGE 102-113

SPORTS GAMES

It's time to get physical with PS2's world of sport. *Pro Evolution Soccer*, *SSX Tricky* and *Tony Hawk's* lead the chase for honours.

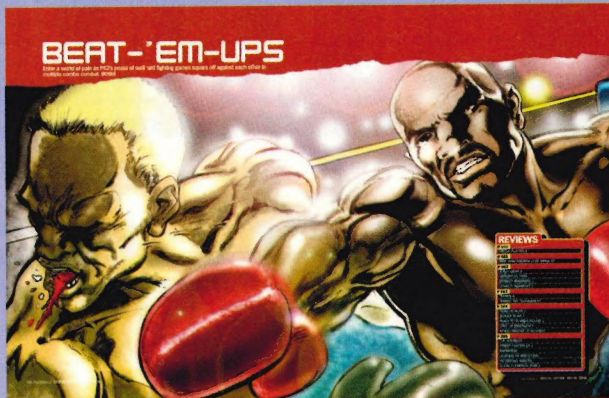
PICK 'N MIX



PAGE 114-117

PICK 'N MIX

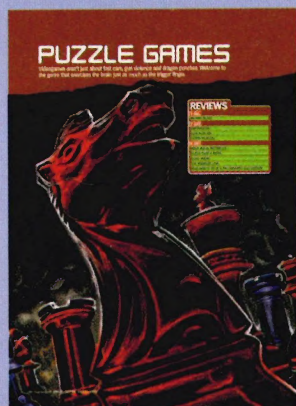
All the genre-busting games that won't fit into any other category.



PAGE 58-65

BEAT-EM-UPS

PS2's well 'ard fighting posse engages in multiple combo combat. *Virtua Fighter 4*, *WWF SmackDown!* and *Tekken 4* come out on top.



PAGE 90-93

PUZZLE GAMES

Tetris, *Worms Blast*, *Fantavision*. It's the thinking gamer's genre.



PAGE 94-97

MUSIC GAMES

The groovy home of Britney, rapping dogs and guitar gimps.

FEATURES



PAGE 12-23

PS2 UNCOVERED

Everything you need to know about PlayStation 2. From its origins to its online future. From the peripherals to the ultimate set-up.



PAGE 24-30

TOP 50 DVDS

We count down the 50 DVDs you must own plus the top five music, comedy, TV and coming soon DVDs.

REGULARS

006 ON THE DVD

Before you simply jam the thing into your console, why not read about the delights of our demo disc, which this month features a massive 13 playable demos! Including *Metal Gear Solid 2*, *Stuntman*, *Final Fantasy X*, *Medal of Honor: Frontline*, *Wipeout Fusion* and *TOCA Race Driver*.

006 COMPETITION

Enter our compo for the chance to win the Top Ten Must-Have PS2 Games.

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130 NEXT ISSUE

Find out what we're up to in the next unmissable *Special Edition*.

PREVIEWS



PAGE 118

THE TOP 40 GAMES COMING TO PS2

Previews of the 40 games we're most looking forward to, including *Pro Evolution Soccer 2*, *Grand Theft Auto: Vice City*, *Final Fantasy XI*, *Soul Calibur 2* and *The Getaway*.

ON THE DVD



THIS ISSUE!

Other magazines let you watch, only **OPS2** lets you play. **PlayStation 2 Greatest Hits Volume 9** features 13 fantastic playable demos of some of PS2's finest games:

METAL GEAR SOLID 2: SONS OF LIBERTY

Break terrorist necks in Solid Snake's latest blockbuster.

TOCA RACE DRIVER

Fast and furious Touring Car simulation.

FINAL FANTASY X

Squares' epic RPG series casts its spell on PS2.

STUNTMAN

Be a stuntman without getting the bruises. Or the ladies.

MEDAL OF HONOR: FRONTLINE

Experience the violence and heroism of WWII.

CONFLICT: DESERT STORM

Take on Saddam in this squad-based Gulf War battler.

PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER

It's the best football game ever made. Just do it.

WIPEOUT FUSION

Futuristic, techno-thumping hovercar classic.

ICO

Ethereal Princess-protecting puzzle adventure.

STAR WARS: JEDI STARFIGHTER

Feel the force in LucasArts' Interstellar shooter.

SMASH COURT TENNIS:

PRO TOURNAMENT

Ace arcade tennis courtesy of Namco's smash hit.

JAK AND DAXTER:

THE PRECURSOR LEGACY

Huge and hugely playable fantasy platforming romp.

REZ

Shooting action and music combine to stunning effect.

PLAYABLE DEMO ONE

METAL GEAR SOLID 2: SONS OF LIBERTY

Publisher: **Konami** Game type: **Adventure** Out: **Now** Players: **1**

The latest in Hideo Kojima's classic cinematic, stealth series is one of PS2's bestselling and, indeed, best games. Get stuck in and find out what all the fuss is about.

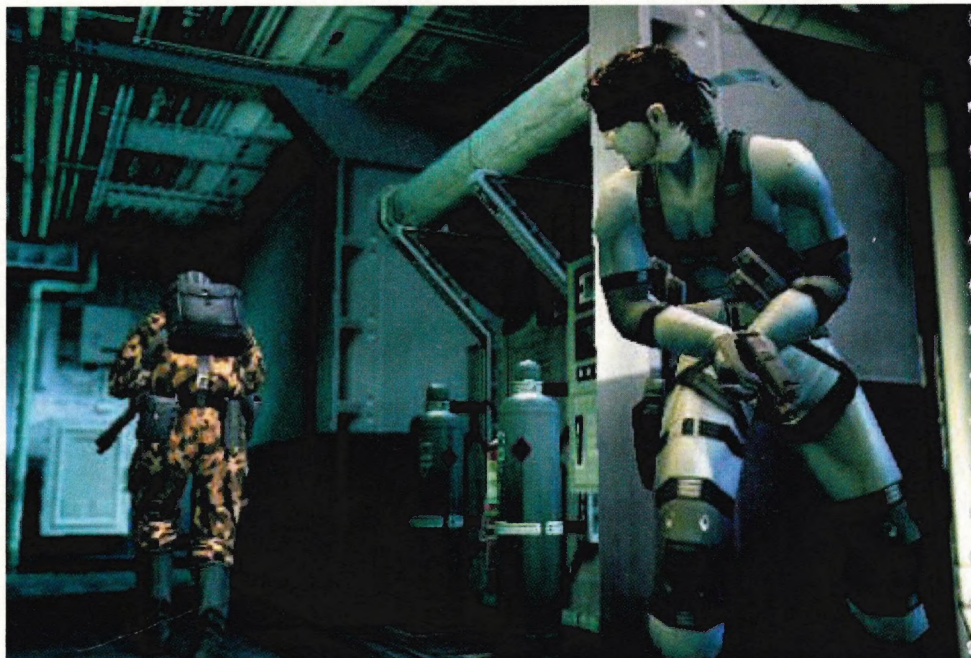
THE DEMO

Once loaded, choose either 'New Game' or 'Special' with ↑/↓ and Ⓞ. Selecting 'Special' takes you through a guide to Snake's moves and abilities, complete with video footage of each. Choosing 'New Game' will take you to the Difficulty Select screen, so pick your setting with ↑/↓ and Ⓞ. Next, select your radar with ↑/↓ and Ⓞ again to begin the game. Watch the intro sequence and listen to Otacon for your mission objectives, then it's time for some Solid Snake action! Your first task is to get to the ship's bridge and the showdown with Olga, but we'll leave the rest for you to discover.



Controls

- L-Stick - Movement (Normal view mode)/ Camera movement (First-person view mode)
- R-Stick - Change camera angle (corner view mode)
- ⓧ - Crawl/Cancel
- Ⓞ - Punch/Confirm/ Knock
- Ⓢ - Weapon or Throw/ Choke (when no weapon equipped)
- ⓐ - Action
- Ⓛ1 - First-person view
- Ⓛ2 - Lock-on
- Ⓛ3 - Equip weapon/ Peek right (corner view)
- Ⓛ4 - Equip item/Peek left (corner view)
- △ - Pause
- ⓐ - Enter Codec mode



PLAYABLE DEMO TWO

TOCA RACE DRIVER

Publisher: **Codemasters** Game type: **Racing sim** Out: **Now** Players: **1 (Full game: 1-4)**

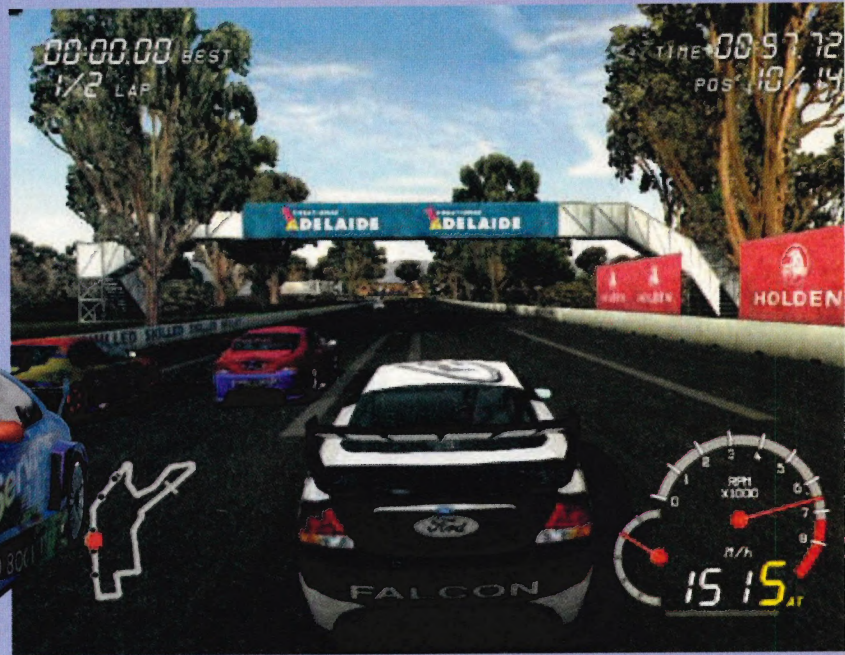
With a story line straight out of *Falcon Crest*, Codemasters' petrol-driven soap opera puts a unique spin on the 3D driving experience, peopling its virtual pit stops with a gaggle of slightly lady mechanics, strapping male egos and fuel-injected Inter-race rivalries that could out-bitch Joan Collins at 50 paces. As roadster genius Ryan McKane, you get to navigate 42 customisable cars across 13 increasingly difficult challenges whilst embroiled in a tangled web of love, honour and murder.

THE DEMO

Once loaded, you join racing rookie Ryan McKane as he buckles into a Proton Satria GTI in order to impress the head honcho of a respected racing team into offering him a contract. Your challenge is to complete one circuit of Italy's famous F1 Monza track in under five minutes and by doing so you can savour, first-hand, how the tight handling and shuddering crash physics that are synonymous with the TOCA series lend themselves to this blockbusting PS2 debut. As if that wasn't enough, you will also get to sample some of the quality cinematics and experience an in-car ear assault courtesy of Iggy Pop and The Stooges. Race on!

Controls

L-Stick - Steer left/right
R-Stick Up - Accelerate
R-Stick Down - Brake
X Accelerate
B Brake/reverse
C Handbrake
A Change view
R1 Look right
L1 Look left
R2 Look behind
PS Pause game



PLAYABLE DEMO THREE

FINAL FANTASY X

Publisher: **SCEE** Game type: **RPG** Out: **Now** Players: **1**

Controls

L-Stick - Move
X Select
C Cancel
A Open inventory
Switch character (Battle mode)
L1/L2 Switch character (Menu screen)

The FF franchise steps up a gear to produce one of the most visually striking games ever. The epic story follows the fortunes of Tidus, a young Blitzball player, who's home of Zanarkand is destroyed by a powerful elemental force known as Sin. Thrown 1,000 years into the future by Sin's cataclysmic attack, Tidus finds himself in a strange land called Spira, where his destiny becomes intertwined with a young woman named Yuna. Along the way, Tidus discovers that the mysterious disappearance of his father several years previously is also linked to the force of Sin.

THE DEMO

After watching the intro, use ←/→ and X to choose to play as either Zanarkand or Besaid Island. Selecting the former will start the demo at Tidus's first encounter with Sin. Opting for the latter starts the demo with Tidus catapulted into the future. After being attacked by Kimahri, you'll meet Yuna and her guardians, and get your first real chance to fight fiends as a party. Use L1 during combat to switch to other characters. For extra power, use Yuna to summon Valefor.





PLAYABLE DEMO FOUR

STUNTMAN

Publisher: **Atari** Game type: **Stunt sim** Out: **Now** Players: **1**

Driver goes to Hollywood. Take the heavy metal motors of Reflections' previous smash hit *Driver* and place in a stunningly original idea for a videogame. You are the Hollywood stuntman in question and must steer a whole range of vehicles ranging from jeeps to three-wheeled tuk-tuks through, around and over film sets, pulling off synapse strumming stunts en route.

Miss your cue and you're on the dole queue. Go wide of the mark and your director will give you a wide berth. Crash and burn and your career will go up in flames. It's like being Evel Knievel but without all the hideous injuries.

THE DEMO

Once loaded, you can sit back and enjoy a rolling demo featuring the game's best bits in a cavalcade of chaos or, even better, engage a playable demo featuring a whole stunt from the game.

You're Dakota Scott and must drive a jeep in the movie *Scarab Of The Lost Souls*. Make your way through the Nazi garrison, hitting your markers and pulling off stunts as the on-screen guides direct. Go too slow, mangle your car or generally make a fool of yourself in front of the cameras and you'll have to go for take two, three, four, five...

Controls

L-Stick - Steer left/right
R-Stick Up/Down - Accelerate/Brake
⊗ Accelerate
⊙ Brake/reverse
Ⓢ Handbrake
Ⓐ Handbrake
Ⓜ Horn
Ⓛ Action button
Ⓡ Right side view
Ⓛ Left side view
Ⓜ Pause game
Ⓛ Toggle camera



PLAYABLE DEMO FIVE

MEDAL OF HONOR: FRONTLINE

Publisher: **EA** Game type: **First-person shooter** Out: **Now** Players: **1**

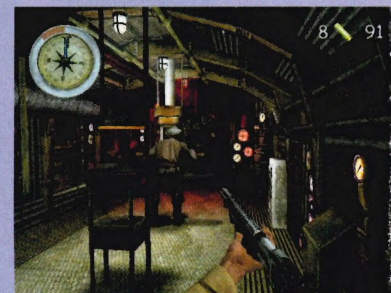
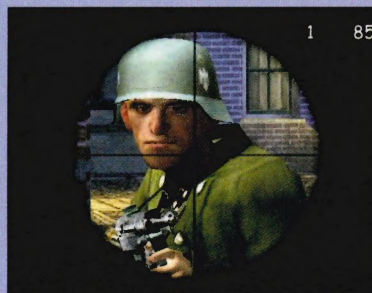
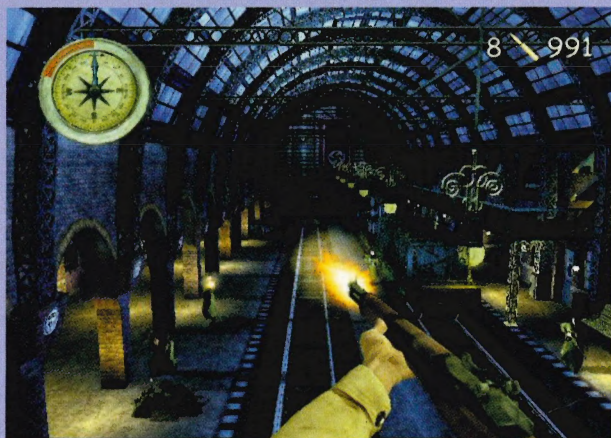
Set over three episodes, the WWII action begins with a D-Day beach-landing scene, then progresses through France, Holland and culminates in Deutschland as you and your allied band of brothers track down an experimental Nazi jet fighter. Featuring some of the best visuals ever seen (just take a look at those particle effects!), unrelenting Nazi-bashing and vastly improved enemy AI, *Frontline* is everything we'd hoped for. And then some.

THE DEMO

Experience the intense first level of the game's second campaign, set in a war-ravaged French town. Your objectives are to: pick up the resistance drop under the tree at the start; provide covering fire from the church tower; secure the submarine fuelling roster; locate the submarine fuelling dock; and stow away in the submarine's cargo. Handy hint: jump into the rear of the crashed jeep at the start and man the mounted machine gun to blitz the enemy.

Controls

L-Stick - Forward/Back/Strafe
R-Stick - Look/Turn
⊗ Jump
Ⓢ Melee
Ⓢ Change Weapon
Ⓐ Action
Ⓛ Fire
Ⓜ Zoom/Corner Peek
Ⓛ Reload
Ⓡ Crouch
Ⓜ Pause
Ⓛ Exit





PLAYABLE DEMO SIX

CONFLICT: DESERT STORM

Publisher: **SCI** Game type: **Combat sim** Out: **Now** Players: **1 (Full game: 1-2)**

A lean, mean fighting machine with the game dynamics to match. Issue orders to your three specialist soldier colleagues, who provide medical, military and strategic cover, as you inveigle your way into the heart of Saddam's arid empire for a Iraqi-battering showdown.

THE DEMO

You get full access to the game's first mission. Air-dropped onto the Kuwait/Iraq border, this four-part mission begins with you having to rescue your captured comrade, Paul 'Eagle-Eye' Foley. First you must locate the shack he is being held in, secure the area using stealth (creeping around using a P-228 Silenced Pistol and a bowie knife) or the full frontal approach (Colt M16A2 Assault Rifle, grenades, anti-tank rocket launchers) and then lead him out to safety. After which he'll join you in battle. Then you must find some C4, take out the bridge supports and get the hell out of there. Easy!

Controls

L-Stick - Walk forwards/backwards, strafe left/right, zoom-in
R-Stick - Look around, aim
⊗ Reload, action
Ⓢ Orders
Ⓢ Crouch, crawl
Ⓢ Inventory
Ⓢ Fire
Ⓢ Assign orders
Ⓢ Look behind
Ⓢ Pause game



PLAYABLE DEMO EIGHT

WIPEOUT FUSION

Publisher: **SCEE** Game type: **Futuristic racer** Out: **Now** Players: **1 (Full game 1-2)**

Controls

L-Stick - Steer
Ⓢ Right air brakes
Ⓢ Left air brakes
Ⓢ Change view

F he fourth in the WipeOut series but the first to appear on PS2, *Fusion* features 42 tracks of full 360° racing set across five incredibly detailed environments. Dizzily fast, furious and gorgeous to look at, *WipeOut Fusion* is the best futuristic racer EVER.

THE DEMO

Read the info screen then click ⊗ twice to race. This demo features the game's new Zone mode, where your ship is propelled endlessly forward and you must steer it around the track through a series of 'zones'. If your shields deplete before you reach zone 30, your ship will explode. Make it and you'll earn a precious medal.

ON THE DVD

PLAYABLE DEMO SEVEN

PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER

Publisher: **Konami** Game type: **Football simulation** Out: **Now** Players: **1-2 (Full game 1-8)**

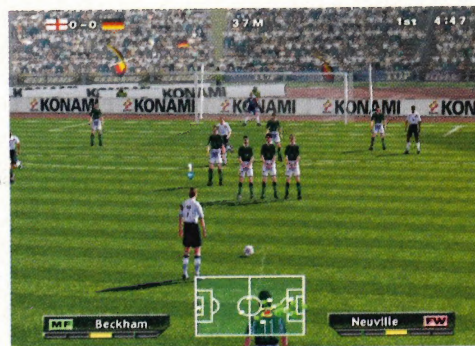
L ove football? Course you do. And if you haven't played it already, you're going to love *Pro Evolution Soccer*. So realistic you can almost feel the draught from a Keano sliding tackle, PES really is the 'beautiful game'.

THE DEMO

Our fantastic two-player demo lets you play the first half of a match between a choice of five teams - England, Germany, Spain, France or Italy. Once the demo has loaded, press ▶ and select 'Match Mode' with ⊗, then choose 'National Teams' and make your selection with ←, → and ⊗. Choose between the available strips, then set your difficulty level - you can obviously raise this as you get more confident - and pick a stadium with ↑, ↓ and ⊗. Set up your team as desired at the next screen, then go to 'Start Match' to get stuck in!

Controls

L-Stick - Move
⊗ Pass/Foot-in tackle
Ⓢ Shoot
Ⓢ Long pass/Slide tackle
Ⓢ Through ball
Ⓢ Switch player
Ⓢ Sprint
Ⓢ Pause/Options



PLAYABLE DEMO NINE

ICO

Publisher: **SCEE** Game type: **Adventure** Out: **Now** Players: **1**

Controls

L-Stick - Run/Swim
R-Stick - View surroundings
⊗ Release
Ⓢ Attack
Ⓢ Action
Ⓢ Jump (in combination with L-Stick to leap)
Ⓢ Call/Pull/Help Yorda
Ⓢ Zoom camera

B orn with small horns protruding from his head, 12-year-old Ico is considered cursed in his village. The poor lad is to be sacrificed by entombment to appease the villagers' gods. However, Ico escapes and discovers the ghostly pale Princess Yorda imprisoned in the same ancient fortress in which he now finds himself. Together, they must make their bid for freedom in SCEE's captivating, innovative adventure.

THE DEMO

Press ▶ and our massive one-level demo begins with Ico escaping his tomb. Your initial task is to locate Princess Yorda and help free her from imprisonment. Once this is done, you must begin finding your way out of the vast castle. Learning to use all of Ico's abilities will be essential if you're to make it through. Along the way you'll have to fend off evil spirits that will try to carry Yorda away and you must also guide her past all the obstacles and puzzles the fortress throws at you.





PLAYABLE DEMO TEN

STAR WARS: JEDI STARFIGHTER

Publisher: **Activision** Game type: **Space shooter** Out: **Now** Players: **1 (Full game 1-2)**

Set 13 years after Nym's struggle against the sinister Trade Federation in the original *Starfighter*, this story intersects *Attack Of The Clones*. Spread over 15 action-packed missions, *Jedi Starfighter* retains the visuals of the original and adds new elements – such as the Jedi Force Powers – to produce a superior sequel.

THE DEMO

Once the game's loaded, press then and watch the intro movie. Our demo features Mission 5 of the game and requires you to defend a spaceport from bombardment by waves of Hex Missiles, Bombers and Sabaoth Fighters. Use your Force Powers (select with D-pad) to take down multiple enemies at once. You've got five minutes before the demo times out to hold off the onslaught.

Controls

L-Stick - Flight
R-Stick - Roll
D-pad - Force Power One
D-pad - Force Power Two
 Fire Lasers
 Manual Target
 Fire Force Power
 Auto Target
 Zoom
 Wingmate
 Boost
 Brake
 Pause



PLAYABLE DEMO TWELVE

JAK AND DAXTER: THE PRECURSOR LEGACY

Publisher: **SCEE** Game type: **Platform adventure** Out: **Now** Players: **1**

Controls

L-Stick - Move
R-Stick - Camera
 Jump
 Punch
 Spinning kick
 Look around
 Duck
 Stats HUD
 Progress screen

A-Grav Zoomer:
L-Stick - Steer
R-Stick - Camera
 Accelerate
 Brake
 Jump
 Stats HUD
 Progress screen

A superb platform adventure, *J&D* revolves around Jak and his rodent-like accomplice, Daxter, who was transformed from his human form by falling into Dark Eco. Your quest is to restore Daxter to his original self and uncover a sinister plot that threatens the world.

THE DEMO

You're asked to stop the Lurkers on Misty Island from releasing the Dark Eco. First off, get to the top of the Precursor Silo and take out the Lurkers operating the cannon. Once achieved, there's still plenty to do on Misty Island. Try freeing the seven scout flies, grabbing the power cells, going for a spin on the A-Grav Zoomer or catching the Sculptor's Muse.



ON THE DVD

Talk to us!

If you have problems with your DVD, pop it in an envelope and send it to the following address. We'll test it and, if faulty, send you out a new one. Write to us at *Official PlayStation 2 Magazine*, Disc Returns, Customer Services, Future Publishing, Cary Court, Bancombe Road Industrial Estate, Somerton, Somerset TA11 6TB.

*Remember, this DVD will only work on a PS2.

PLAYABLE DEMO ELEVEN

SMASH COURT TENNIS PRO TOURNAMENT

Publisher: **SCEE** Game type: **Tennis sim** Out: **Now** Players: **1-2 (Full game 1-4)**

Dropping the Anna Kournikova moniker (but not the Russian lovely herself from the roster, thank goodness), Namco's latest smash effortlessly plays the tennis opposition off court. It's great in single-player and life-sappingly addictive with a MultiTap plugged in and up to three other players. Even if tennis isn't your thing, the sublime control system will allow the most uncoordinated newbie to play like Pistol Pete himself.

THE DEMO

While our demo locks out after five minutes of play, there's still plenty of time to hone your Tennis skills. Once loaded, choose 50 or 60Hz mode (depending on what your TV can handle) with and , then press to begin. For a two-player game, player 2 should press at this point. Use and to select singles, doubles and co-op or versus, then choose either Hingis or Sampras to begin the showdown in the final at Wimbledon.



Controls

L-Stick - Move
 Serve/Return (Hold for extra power)
 Lob

PLAYABLE DEMO THIRTEEN

REZ

Publisher: **SCEE** Game type: **Shoot-'em-up** Out: **Now** Players: **1**

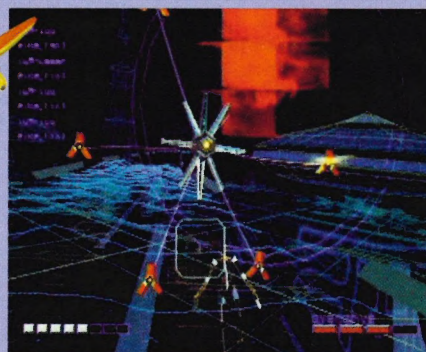
Controls

L-Stick - Move
 Fire (Hold down to chain multiple targets)
 Fire smart bomb

Sega is well-known for creating both innovative and enjoyable games and its transition to a multi-platform software developer will be a highly beneficial one for PS2 gamers if *Rez* is anything to go by. United Game Artists' genre-bending 'dramatic musical shooter' is a full-scale assault on the senses with its hypnotic beats and psychedelic visual style. Travelling through the firewall defences of a powerful supercomputer you must hack your way through to the CPU itself using sound to defeat the multiple foes the machine throws at you.

THE DEMO

After loading, press , then again to begin the game. There are ten layers to make your way through before reaching the showdown with the Earth Giga at the end of the demo.



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Atomic Kitten	/ Tide is high	1861904	Genesis	/ Jesus he knows me	1861889	Scooter	/ Ramp(The logical song)	1861859	PPK	/ ResuRection	1861710
Avril Lavigne	/ Complicated	1861880	Herman Hermits	/ No milk today	1861892	The Simpsons (TV Theme)		1860280	Shakira	/ Whenever Wherever	1861772
Camp kill yourself (CKY)	/ Shippensburg	1861898	Jennifer Paige	/ Stranded	1861900	Beverly Hills Cop	/ Axel F.	1860562	Kylie Minogue	/	
CCR	/ Have you ever seen the rain	1861883	John Fogerty	/ Centerfield	1861879	Ja Rule feat.Ashanti	/ Always on time	1861764	Cant get you out of my head		1861692
Coldplay	/ In my place	1861886	Man in the iron mask (Movie Theme)		1861887	Nickelback	/ How you remaind me	1861769	Darude	/ Sandstorm	1860229
Daniel Bedingfield	/		Milky	/ Just the way you are	1861890	Mission Impossible (TV Theme)		1861421	Men behaving badly (TV Theme)		1861400
James Dean(I wanna know)		1861888	Nek feat.Laura Pausini	/ Sei solo tu	1861897	Ashanti	/ Foolish	1861793	Pink Panther (Movie Theme)		1861596
Darren Hayes	/ Strange relationship	1861901	N.E.R.D	/ Rockstar	1861895	Linkin Park	/ In The End	1861183	Daniel Bedingfield	/ Gotta get thru this	1861730
Def Leppard	/ Now	1861893	Pointer Sisters	/ I'm so excited	1861885	Eminem	/ Without me	1861824	Alien Ant Farm	/ Smooth Criminal	1861693
Dj Slow	/ Got to funk	1861881	Ronan Keating	/ I love it when we do	1861884	Ian Van Dahl	/ Reason	1861860	Will Smith	/	
Eminem	/ Hailies song	1861882	Royksopp	/ Remaind me	1861894	Halloween (Movie Theme)		1861077	Black suits comin' (Men in black 2)		1861851
Entwine	/ Losinf the ground	1861891	Santana	/ Smooth	1861899	Lasgo	/ Something	1861770	Pink	/ Dont let me get me	1861792
Elvis Presley	/ Suspicious minds	1861902	Starwars (Episode2)	/ Across the stars	1861878	Fat Joe feat.Ashanti	/ What's liv	1861802	Mad House	/ Like a prayer	1861797
			Sugababes	/ Round round	1861896	Ian van Dahl	/ Castles in the sky	1860725	Vanessa Carlton	/ A thousand miles	1861849
									Faithless	/ Insomnie	1861180

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Examples		PIG SEARCH	1880061
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1870521	1870209	1870480	1870293
1870337	1870063	1870147	1870478
1870449	1870100	1870470	1870025
1870083	1870519	1870211	1870005
Most Popular			
1870213	1870302	1870128	
1870389	1870345	1870552	
1870185	1870082	1870493	
1870125	1870001	1870297	
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PS2 UNCOVERED

Launched in March 2000, Sony's black box continues to soar as the biggest name in the world of home entertainment. Join us now as we reveal everything you need to know about PS2's past, present and future.



Doesn't time fly when you're having fun? It's now two and a half years since PlayStation 2 burst forth into the videogame world amid unprecedented hype and rabid excitement. Now firmly established as the best and bestselling next-gen console on the market, PS2's future is so bright it should probably wear shades. The console has already played host to some of the best games ever

made – from the stealth supremo *Metal Gear Solid 2*, to the football champ *Pro Evolution Soccer* and the racing legend *Gran Turismo 3* – and its line-up of future greats puts rival consoles to shame: *Soul Calibur 2*, *Grand Theft Auto: Vice City*, *Final Fantasy XI*, we could go on and on.

Away from the games and in its other guise as a home entertainment system, PS2 runs DVD movies with as much

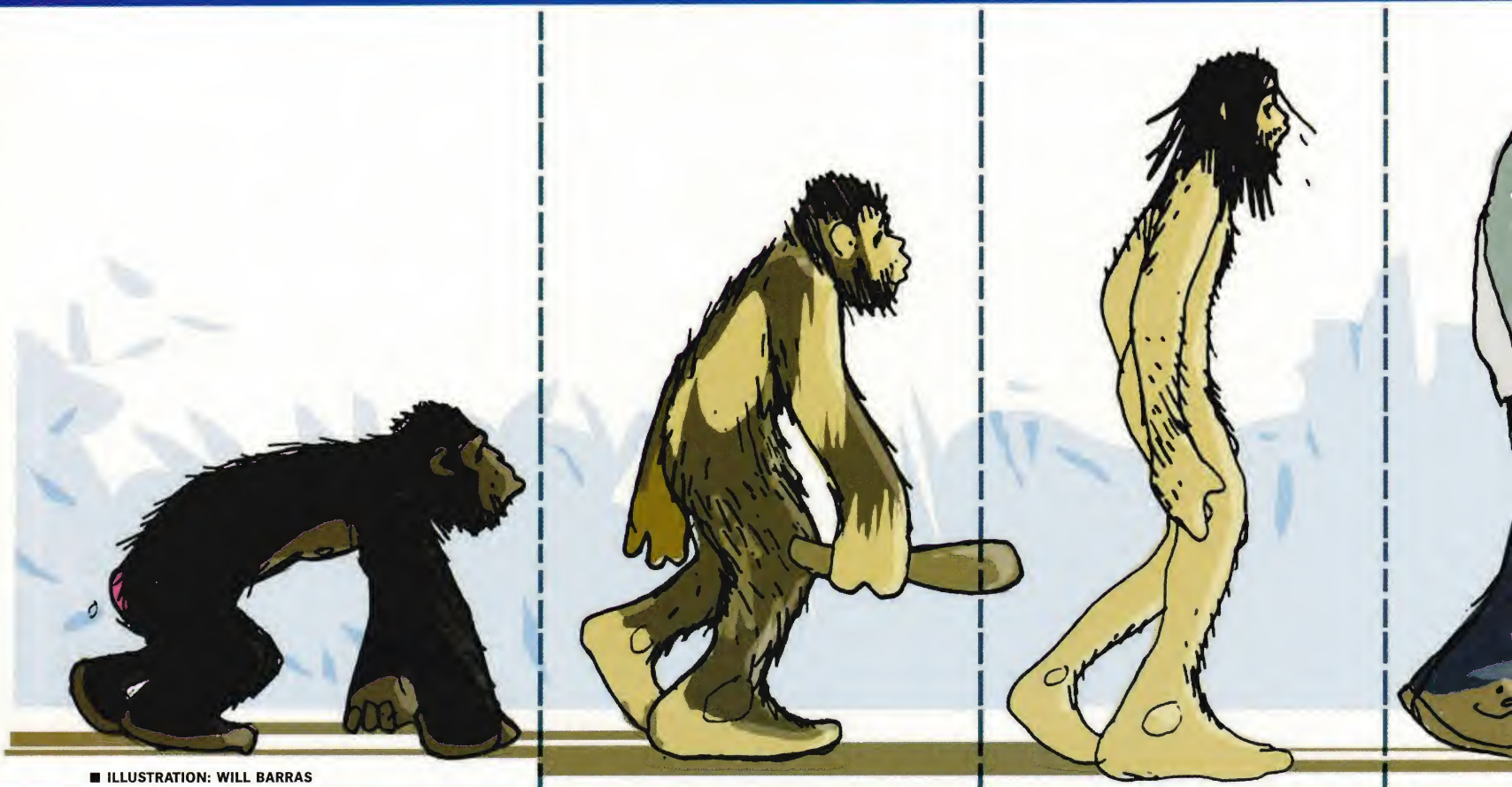
alacrity as most affordable DVD players. Soon, it will connect to the World Wide Web, mobile phones, a camera that puts you 'in the game' and then... the world!

Over the following pages we disembowel the machine and analyse every aspect of its capabilities in our virtual workshop. So turn the page and join us for the complete user's guide to PlayStation 2.



EVOLUTION

Nine years in the life of Sony has seen a transformation from techno titan to gaming guru. Here's how the company did it...



■ ILLUSTRATION: WILL BARRAS

TIMELINE



PRE-1993

In the late Eighties, while working with Nintendo to produce a CD-ROM drive for its Super Nintendo Entertainment System, Sony decides to produce its own machine to run software from either a CD drive or SNES-style game cartridges. Sony's Research and Development team is headed by one Ken Kutaragi, the man who designed the audio chip for SNES. Just as this new 'Play-Station' is named, Nintendo calls off the deal. Understandably, Sony isn't at all impressed but decides to go ahead regardless. After an unsuccessful prototype, the cartridge port is dropped, and Sony promises that its 'PS-X' (working title) will be CD-based and have 3D graphics capabilities.



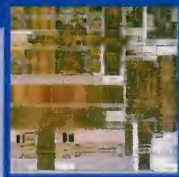
1993-1994

Sony approaches third-party developers to ensure that its new console will be well-supported by the industry. In Japan, software giants Konami and Namco agree to develop for the console, while Sony Europe pays a cool \$48 million for Psygnosis. This bold decision to encourage as much software for its console as possible (in direct contrast to Nintendo's strict quality control) will prove vital to Sony's eventual success. The now hyphen-free PlayStation is launched in Japan on 3 December 1994, priced ¥39,800 (£250) and sells like hot cakes. September 1995 sees the European launch, over 50,000 units are shifted in six weeks.



1996-1998

By August 1996, over 72 million PlayStations have been sold worldwide. That figure is doubled in a little over six months. By the end of '98 the number of units shipped has passed a staggering 50 million, with 389 million games sold; including massive successes like *Gran Turismo* and *Final Fantasy VII*. Sony's newcomer is eclipsing Sega's Saturn console, and even the more powerful Nintendo 64.



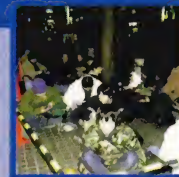
MARCH 1999

The 'next generation PlayStation' is announced in Tokyo by Kutaragi-san. He predicts that it will be "the future of home computer entertainment." It will be three times as powerful as a 500MHz Pentium III, and 50 times more powerful than the original PlayStation. It will also have an Emotion Engine™ processor and a separate Graphics System processor that will be able to push out up to 75 million polygons a second. A next-gen *Tekken* demo wows the crowds, as does talk of more involving gameplay, backwards compatibility with the original PS, the ability to play DVDs and a convergent future.



SEPTEMBER 1999

The PlayStation 2 is finally given its name and a launch date. It's a bold design with a mix of Zen psychology (representing Earth and space) allied with a look and functionality more in tune with home cinema kit than a videogame machine. The games look fantastic; an early glimpse of *Gran Turismo 3* suggests near photo-realistic graphics are within reach. "We are on the threshold of a golden era of home entertainment that stretches the definition of videogames in the same way that the development of colour film techniques changed cinema forever," says Phil Harrison, Senior Vice President of Development, SCE.



4 MARCH 2000

Massive queues greet the launch of the PlayStation 2 in Japan, with 980,000 sold over the first weekend. Over a million games are shipped, and Japan's previously modest DVD movie market doubles overnight.



8 JUNE 2000

Sony announces that it is to produce a combined broadband modem and hard disk drive for the PS2. This confirms that Kutaragi's earlier prediction that the PS2 will be the "future of home computer entertainment" was far from waffle. A tomorrow filled with downloadable media (games, music, films) is assured. A second announcement tells of the relaunch of the PlayStation - with cute new portable dimensions - as the PSone. This is the first time that a company has promoted two generations of console at the same time.



4 AUGUST 2000

Due to unprecedented demand for the PS2 in Japan the European launch date is pushed back to 24 November, just under a month behind its previous shared launch date with the USA. Stateside gamers will still get their PS2s on 26 October. A price of £299 is announced for the UK, identical to that of the original PlayStation on its launch in 1995. So much for inflation.



24 NOVEMBER 2000

The PS2 finally hits Europe with massive launch titles *Tekken Tag Tournament* and *Ridge Racer V* sharing the limelight with dark horses like *SSX* and *TimeSplitters*. There are 33 launch games in all, by far the largest day-one software line-up of any console ever. A lesson has been learned from PSone's games-led success.



4 JUNE 2001

Sony cuts the PS2 price in the UK by thirty pounds (due to European exchange rates), meaning the PlayStation 2 now costs just £269.99. Further price drops are rumoured for 2002, to coincide with the arrival of Microsoft's Xbox and Nintendo's GameCube.



27 JULY 2001

PS2's most eagerly-awaited title, *Gran Turismo 3: A-spec*, finally races onto the UK shelves, sparking the kind of excitement usually associated with blockbuster movie premieres and landmark album releases. Over its first weekend, *GT3* sells a staggering 120,000 units and leads to a 20% increase in PS2 sales. Put another way, a mere three days after release, nearly a quarter of all UK PS2 owners have bought the game.



28 SEPTEMBER 2001

In an aggressive move to counteract the launch hype for Xbox (14 March 2002 in the UK) and GameCube (3 May 2002 in the UK), and to ensure healthy sales in the run up to Christmas, SCEE slashes the price of PlayStation 2 to a bargain-ous £199.99. It has the desired effect. UK PS2 sales are immediately tripled and with a superb line-up of games due to hit the shelves (including *Pro Evolution Soccer*, *Devil May Cry* and *Grand Theft Auto III*) PS2 establishes an unassailable lead in the console wars.



13 NOVEMBER 2001

As the Xbox is launched in the US, its thunder is well and truly stolen by the release of PS2's other 'most eagerly-awaited title', *Metal Gear Solid 2: Sons Of Liberty*. Hideo Kojima's masterful tactical espionage adventure sells an astonishing 500,000 copies after a mere TWO DAYS on sale. That success is repeated when the game is launched in Japan (30 Nov) and Europe (8 March).



28 AUGUST 2002

SCEE knocks a further £30 off the PS2's recommended retail price. The console now costs just £169.99. This all but guarantees the number of PS2s sold in PAL territories will hit 10 million by the end of the year. The current tally worldwide is 30 million units sold. Meanwhile, on 27 August, PS2 online gaming is launched in America to massive public interest. With online action yet to hit the UK (see page 017 for more on this) and an incredible line-up of games due out before Christmas (see our Top 40 previews on page 118) PS2 gamers have got more to look forward to than any other console owners. There can be no doubt, PlayStation 2 is soaring...

1. MEMORY CARD PORTS

Essential for those occasions when you can't dedicate 150 consecutive hours to the latest in the *Final Fantasy* series, the PS2's 8Mb Memory Cards leave you free to strike a (relatively) healthy balance between indoor and outdoor life. Bigger ones are planned, as is Memory Stick data storage.

2. JOYPAD PORTS

Doing their best to blend into the ribbed facade of the PS2, these two ports are identical to those found on the original PlayStation. Plug in those Dual Shocks and you're away.

3. USB PORTS

The Universal Serial Bus, or USB interface, has nothing to do with public transport but everything to do with connectivity between your PS2 and all manner of function enhancing peripherals – keyboards, lightguns, dance mats, etc. The USB port is already the industry standard for Macs and PCs, the PS2 is in good company.

4. I-LINK PORT

Sony call it the I-Link port or S400, Apple Mac users call it Firewire, while tech-buffs refer to it with a fond sigh as the IEEE1394. You can call it an extremely efficient way of transferring large amounts of digital information (the kind you find in high resolution

images) to and from your PS2. Oh and you can use it to connect to your mates' consoles for six-player *Gran Turismo 3* action. Quite useful, then.

5. THE CD/DVD DRAWER

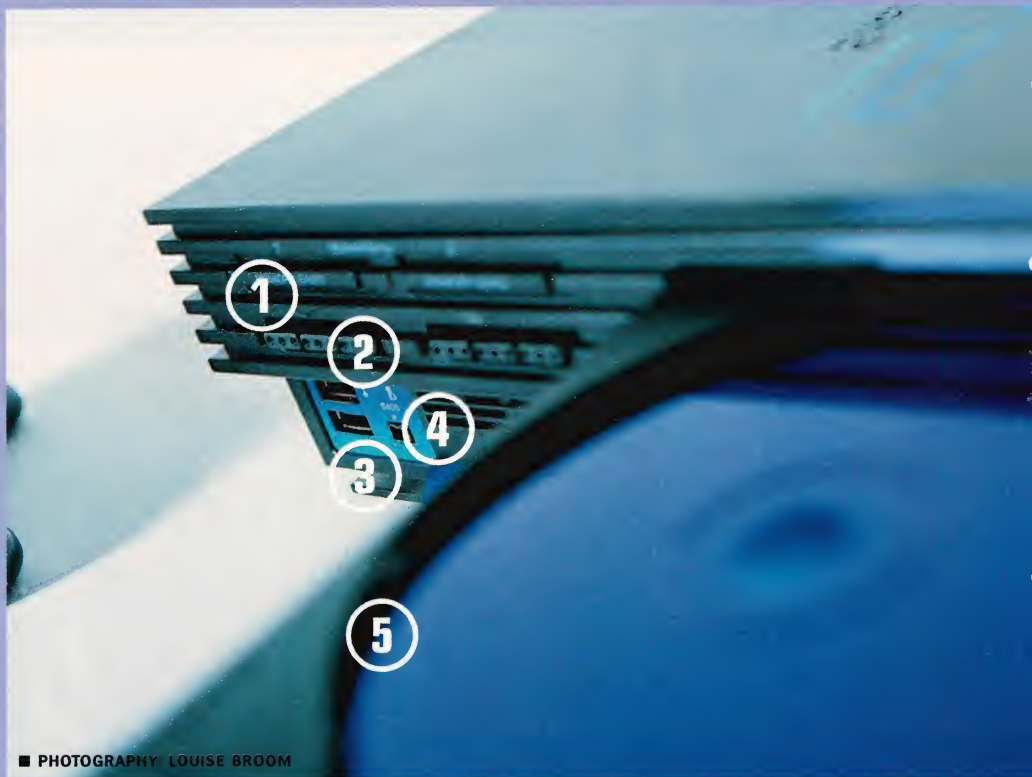
Dispensing with the low rent, pop-up CD lid of the PSone, the new machine has a sliding drawer giving it instantly enhanced gravitas. But the desired position is to stand your PS2 on its end, and with that in mind Sony has given the tray a small lip to keep the disc steady.

6. RESET BUTTONS

The Reset button is located directly above (or to the left if the machine is vertical) of the Open button and has two functions. Press it briefly and the PS2's RAM will clear, and the current disc will reload. Pressing and holding the button puts it in powersave mode. Reset's LED glows red when the power is on but no disc is inside, and green at other times.

7. OPEN BUTTON

Self explanatory this one. The open button triggers the CD drawer to slide out with supreme smoothness but that's only half the story: press it again and the whole process goes into reverse, accompanied by a gently winking, ice blue LED that glows once a disc is loaded. Space-age.



■ PHOTOGRAPHY: LOUISE BROOM

HANDS ON

Much like the human body, the surface of the PlayStation 2 harbours all kinds of knobs, buttons and cheeky orifices. Here's what they're all for...

8. EXPANSION PORT

That sizeable, flap-concealed cavity to the left of the cooling fan is the port for Sony's forthcoming hard disk drive/broadband modem.

9. A/V OUT

Identical in all but shade to the PSone's, this thing connects your system to the outside world via the medium of cable, and so rescues your PS2 from life as a flashy, lightly humming paperweight. In short, you connect your TV from here.

10. COOLING FAN

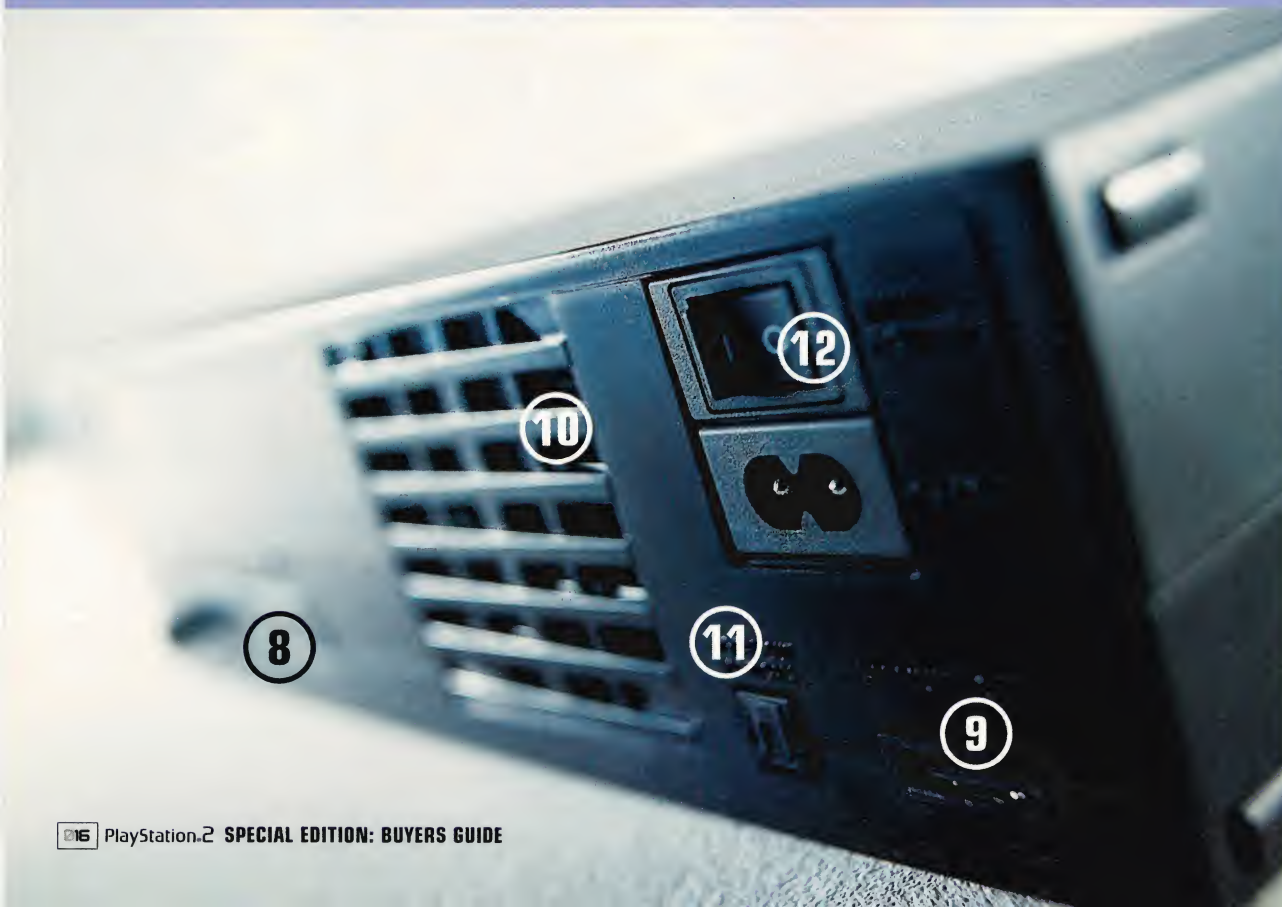
This sucks. No, really it does. The PS2 is a beefier console than its grey older brother and requires more energy to push out all those polygons, hence the need for this fan to keep it cool.

11. DIGITAL OUT

An optical digital output which enables those of you with the additional hardware to channel the PS2's superb audio into a Digital Amplifier for the Surround Sound experience.

12. POWER SWITCH

In keeping with the PS2's overall air of sleek functionality, its predecessor's fun-sized on/off button has been replaced by a discreet switch hidden around the back above the power socket. Instead of turning it off, you have the option to send your baby to sleep by holding the reset button down. Once in powersave mode you can rouse it again by pressing reset or tapping the eject button.



6




7



DUAL SHOCK 2

Reach out and touch as hard or gently as you like... You great big tease.

Digital? Pahl Digital shmigital. In the world of game controllers, analogue is now king. The original PlayStation Dual Shock had analogue sticks but digital buttons. The Dual Shock 2 might look identical but it's now fully analogue with buttons that can detect 256 degrees of pressure. Let us explain...

Imagine you're playing a beat-'em-up. With a normal Dual Shock, a kick is a kick however hard you're hammering the  button. With the Dual Shock 2, the force of it is proportional to the pressure you exert. Gently tap  and your fighter will knee his opponent in the family jewels. Slam that button hard and he'll flying kick him into the middle of next week. Playing a football sim? A small stab of  will produce a weak shot while a hard press will slam the ball into the roof of the net. The possibilities are endless. Whether minutely judging top spin in a tennis title or gradually accelerating out of a *Gran Turismo 3* corner, the future is here – and it's very sensitive.



BORDER CONTROL

Forget the shady world of importation. The PS2 you'll find in high street shops is not the same as overseas models and here's why should stick with your PAL...

Although identical on the surface to its brethren, the European PlayStation 2 actually has a number of important differences compared to the Japanese and American models.

For one, your UK PS2 will not be able to play imported software made for the American and Japanese machines. This is a result of differing broadcast standards over the three territories. We have the PAL system which has better picture definition and updates at a speed of 50Hz, they have NTSC which has an inferior picture but updates at a quicker 60Hz. In short, buy British.

The second difference is a sizeable port in the rear of US and European systems that will eventually accommodate the hard drive. Japanese models will have an external hard disk drive with the PS2's distinctive styling.

Thirdly, the PAL PS2 comes with the DVD driver software pre-installed – in a sentence, you can play DVD movies straight out of the box. Buyers in Japan have had to install theirs onto a memory card bundled with the system, which is fiddly but was originally planned as a means of allowing upgrades as new technology emerged. In your machine the driver chip itself will be upgradeable.

And while we're on the subject, your PS2 will only be able to play Region 2 and Region 0 DVD discs. However, since R2 covers Europe, Japan, South Africa and the Middle East, those itching for a *Darius* Mehrjooie triple bill will not be disappointed. Turn to page 24 for a rundown of the Top 50 DVDs you can buy.

IN THE BOX

So you've bought one, got it home, but the PS2's minimalist packaging is giving nothing away. What are you going to find when the box is opened?

PLAYSTATION 2

The console you've paid all that money for. If it isn't in the box be sure to complain very loudly.

DUAL SHOCK 2 CONTROLLER

It's sparkly black. It vibrates. It's extremely sensitive.

MANUALS

Friendly guidance to assist you with the tricky stuff. Like how to turn the console on.

POWER CABLE

Gives your PS2 the will to live.

AV CABLE WITH SCART ADAPTOR

Connects your PS2 to any TV at the front or in the SCART socket. Inferior to an RGB SCART [see over].

DEMO DISC

Including: *Airblade*, *This Is Football 2002*, *World Rally Championship*, *Jak and Daxter* and *Wipeout Fusion*.

MINI MAG

A small taster of the Official PlayStation 2 Magazine.

PS2 ONLINE

A future of online *Final Fantasy* battles, *GT* races and *Resident Evil* zombie-slaying isn't too far away..

Japanese PS2 gamers have been indulging in online gaming since the launch of *Final Fantasy XI* in May, and as of 27 August, the PS2 Network Adaptor package has also been launched in the US. Costing just \$39.99, SCEA hopes that by the end of 2002 a million Adaptors will have been sold into the homes of American PS2 owners.

But what does all this mean to us PS2 owners in the UK? If the idea of online gaming appeals to you, you're probably wondering why SCEA has yet to announce similar plans for Europe. Their reluctance is probably due to slightly differing priorities to their US counterparts. While SCEA seem content to just give gamers the opportunity to get to grips with online gaming, SCEA has made a commitment to much wider and more ambitious network functions. These include web browsing, online chat, video messaging, downloadable game demos and music samples, plus video on demand.

All these functions would rely on a high-speed broadband connection to operate. This is highlighted by the fact that any European version of the Network Adaptor will not feature an analogue 56k modem function and has instead been dubbed the Broadband Unit. It seems SCEA would rather give a minority of broadband-subscribing PS2 owners a high quality service from the start. Offering an analogue modem option would attract more customers, but its potentially sub-standard quality isn't something SCEA seems prepared to risk. Rest assured, as soon as solid plans are unveiled you'll find about them here first.



The US network adaptor and Hard Disc Drive slotting home.



US PS2 owners can plug in and play online either through broadband or dial-up modem.



8MB MEMORY CARD

Although you're free to use old PSone Memory Cards they'll only be useful if you're taking advantage of the PS2's backwards compatibility. PS2 game saves require the increased capacity of the 8MB memory card. Sony is also paving the way for a future of secure game downloading by incorporating its MagicGate encryption software into the cards. This, in conjunction with the hard drive, will eventually enable you to pay for and then download games.



MULTITAP

The new MultiTap is a tiny ribbed triumph of design, looking for all the world like a diminutive PS2 but with just enough surface area for four controllers and their accompanying Memory Cards to hook up to it. An essential purchase, without it, four-player games of *Pro Evolution Soccer* and group *TimeSplitters 2* fragfests will be but a delicious, distant dream. Fork out for two, and the sofa cramped world of eight-player gaming can be yours.



VERTICAL & HORIZONTAL STANDS

These are designed to give your PS2 extra stability and complete the blue/black aesthetic. In truth, since a horizontally placed PS2 has a marginally lower centre of gravity than a Persian rug, there's little practical need for that one. As for the vertical stand, well, the machine is a lot sturdier than it first looks standing on end.

VIDEO LEADS

Alternative routes to getting your PS2 connected.



RGB SCART: The supreme cable. It splits the image into its component colours – red, green and blue – and sends them to the TV separately to get the ultimate picture. Buy one.



S-Video Cable: Similar to the AV Cable, but the resulting picture is sharper and cleaner. S-Video connections are found on more expensive televisions.



RFU Lead: If you own an older TV it may not have a SCART socket, in which case you'll have to buy an RFU lead that connects to the telly's round aerial socket. Or buy a new TV.



AV Adaptor: A largely superfluous device, its main use is to connect a lightgun to PS2. However, the G-Con 2 lightgun comes complete with its own adaptor.

■ PHOTOGRAPHY: LOUISE BROOM

PERIPHERALS

Hope you've still got some cash in the bank because no PlayStation 2 completist should be forced to live without accessories such as this lot...

HOW MUCH?

If you want your sweaty hands on any of these extras, it's going to cost. Here's exactly how much each one will set you back:

Horizontal Stand: £9.99
Vertical Stand: £9.95 (yes, 4p cheaper!)
SCART Cable: £34.99
S-Video Cable: £19.99
RFU Cable: £14.99
AV (Composite) Adaptor: £14.99
Memory Card (8Mb): £27.99
Dual Shock 2: £19.99
MultiTap: £29.99
GT Force Steering Wheel: £59.99
G-Con 2 Light Gun: £19.99



GT FORCE STEERING WHEEL

Available both separately and packaged with the game that gives it its name, this sturdy wheel and pedal combo is the best we've ever encountered. In tune with GT3's handling physics to a pitch-perfect degree and boasting force feedback which responds uncannily to your performance, this is the ideal driving aid for those who want that extra bit of realism.



G-CON 2 LIGHT GUN

The redesigned G-Con looks sexier, is much lighter, has new 'clip' and 'hammer' buttons and is even more unerringly accurate. Like the PSone version, it plugs into the USB peripheral port with a secondary lead slotting into the accompanying multi-out adapter. You can get your hands on one of these babies separately or packaged with the blast-tastic *Time Crisis 2*.



FREE DVD REMOTE!

PS2 with FREE DVD Remote ...£169.99

- Official Dual Shock Controller
- FREE DVD Remote Control and SCART lead

PS2 Fire Pack ...£199.99

- TWO Official Dual Shock Controllers
- Official 8 MB Memory Card
- SCART lead

0% FINANCE AVAILABLE

	ADD GT3 for only £14.99 SAVE £5		ADD MGS2 (15) for only £19.99 SAVE £25		ADD GTA 3 (18) for only £24.99 SAVE £20
--	--	--	---	--	--

Game deals only apply if you buy them at the same time as any PlayStation 2.

TR: ANGEL	SW: BOUNTY	THE GETAWAY	TIMESPLITTERS 2	THE THING	TEKKEN 4	TOCA RACE	GTA: VICE CITY	METAL GEAR 2
37.99	34.99	34.99	34.49	34.49	38.99	34.99	34.99	24.99

BEST SELLING PS2 GAMES

2002 FIFA WORLD CUP	38.99	HEADHUNTER	33.99
AGGRESSIVE INLINE	33.99	JAK & DAXTER (PLATINUM)	18.99
BRITNEY'S DANCE BEAT	26.99	JAMES BOND: AGENT UNDER FIRE	38.99
COMMANDOS 2: MEN OF COURAGE	34.99	MEDAL OF HONOUR: FRONTLINE	37.99
CONFLICT DESERT STORM	31.99	METAL GEAR SOLID 2 (15)	24.99
CRAZY TAXI (PLATINUM)	18.99	NINJA ASSAULT & OFFICIAL G-CON 2	44.99
DARK CLOUD	35.99	ONIMUSHA 2	35.99
DEUS EX	36.99	PRISONER OF WAR	34.99
DEVIL MAY CRY	35.99	PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 2	33.99
DEVIL MAY CRY 2	38.99	RATCHET & CLANK	34.99
DRAKON: THE ANCIENTS GATES	34.99	RED FACTION 2	33.99
DYNASTY WARRIORS 3	37.99	RESIDENT EVIL: CODE VERONICA X (PLATINUM)	18.99
FINAL FANTASY X & BONUS DVD	39.99	SOLDIER OF FORTUNE GOLD	33.99
FIREBLADE	31.99	SPIDER-MAN	32.99
FREETSTYLE	37.99	SSX TRICKY	38.99
GRAN TURISMO 3 A-SPEC (PLATINUM)	18.99	STAR TREK: VOYAGER ELITE FORCE	33.99
GRAND THEFT AUTO 3 (18)	28.99	STAR WARS: THE FORCE UNLEASHED	34.99
GRAND THEFT AUTO: VICE CITY (18)	34.99	- EP 1: STARFIGHTER (PLATINUM)	18.99
GT CONCEPT 2002: TOKYO-GENEVA	22.99	- BOUNTY HUNTER	34.99

MORE GAMES ONLINE VISIT:
UKplaystation2.com

SAVE £30

METAL GEAR SOLID 2 (15) & OFFICIAL SONY BLACK 8 MB MEMORY CARD (FOR PS2 ONLY)

44.99 INC VAT

STAR BUY

OFFICIAL SONY DUAL SHOCK 2 ANALOGUE CONTROLLER - CRIMSON RED, OCEAN BLUE, BLACK - (FOR PS2 ONLY)

19.99 INC VAT

STAR BUY

OFFICIAL DVD INFRA-RED REMOTE WITH DVD UPGRADE CD (FOR PS2 ONLY)

18.99 INC VAT

SAVE £12

OFFICIAL GT3 FORCE FEEDBACK STEERING WHEEL & PEDALS (FOR PS2 ONLY)

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STAR BUY

DANCING STAGE PARTY EDITION GAME - INCLUDING KYLIE, 'CAN'T GET YOU OUT OF MY HEAD' & CLUB 7, 'DON'T STOP MOVIN' (FOR PS2, PS1)

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D.I.Y PROGRAMMING

Your PS2 isn't just about playing other people's games. Somewhere in that sleek black box is a complete home development machine allowing you to make your own games. Here are two ways to discover it.

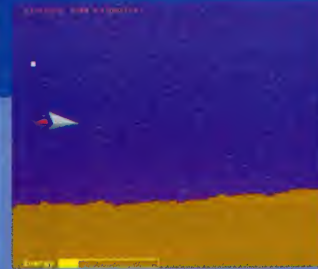
YABASIC

WHAT IS IT?

Yabasic, which stands for Yet Another BASIC, is a new version of the old programming language, BASIC (Beginner's All-purpose Symbolic Instruction Code). As the name suggests, it's a simple computer language that uses easy-to-remember commands rather than lines of numbers that only geeks understand. Yabasic was originally written for computers running Windows or Unix, but Sony licensed the code and released a PS2 version.

WHAT CAN IT DO?

It'll let you write simple games and graphics demos in a very straightforward environment. As Sarah Ewan at SCEE explains, "The development environment for Yabasic is pretty much just a text editor, with some handy copy 'n paste functionality [so that you can easily try out the examples provided on the demo disc], and the facility to allow you to save things you write to memory card." She also adds that,



"Anyone who wants to use Yabasic for any length of time would probably buy a USB keyboard (not exactly expensive), as using the controller to input code as you write it is pretty painstaking." In order to achieve anything with this creative utility, you'll have to learn to program in BASIC, but you'll find plenty of guides on the Internet (and there is some documentation on the PS2 demo disc that came with your machine). For a good introduction head right over to <http://people.a2000.nl/avanarum/YabasicPS2/index.html> or Sony's own site at <http://www.playstation-basic.com>.

If you're interested in getting into game development this is an excellent way to learn. SCEE's Mike Nabarro told

us, "Many of the kids who cut their teeth with Acorn, Commodore or Sinclair BASIC are now the programmers leading the games industry. But as the diverging evolution of the '80s home computer gave rise to the modern PC and games console, that path has now largely disappeared. Initiatives such as Yabasic are an attempt to reach out to inspire and equip the next generation of games developers." A Pong or Space Invaders clone would be a good start.

HOW DO I GET IT?

You should have received a demo disc containing Yabasic when you bought your PlayStation 2.

LINUX FOR PS2

WHAT IS IT?

Linux is an operating system (or 'OS') like Mac OS or Windows and is used to manage all the programs running on a computer. Linux is different, though, because it's 'open source' which means anyone can download it from the Internet for free and fiddle around with all the code. If you did this with Windows '98, Microsoft would send some men round to kick your head in.

WHAT CAN IT DO?

The Linux kit comes with a hard drive, a keyboard and lots of software and manuals giving users complete access to the innards of the PS2, including the graphics processors (or 'Vector Units'). It effectively turns the console into a home computer and is very similar to the PS2 development kit that game programmers use, with some restrictions (i.e. you won't be able to hack game saves on your memory card to give you loads of extra goodies). There are currently around 10,000 PS2 Linux users in Europe, working on a variety of ideas. SCEE's Sarah Ewan told us, "Current projects cover everything from cluster computing projects to attempts to get Quake running! Linux developers fall into two groups; those who want to write graphics games and demos, and those who want to write other software - anything from new versions of Linux to Artificial Intelligence engines and neural net simulations." Eventually, it is likely that games and programs developed using Linux will be available for download from the Internet - they may even be distributed on magazine demo discs. If you want to keep an eye on the latest Linux activity go to Sony's dedicated website at <http://playstation2-linux.com>.



HOW DO I GET IT?

Linux for PS2 costs £192 and is only available via mail order from <http://www.linuxplay.com/>

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PlayStation 2
THE THIRD PLACE

THAT'S ENTERTAINMENT

It's not just a games console, you know? No sir, PlayStation 2 is also a fully-functional DVD player that can connect to state-of-the-art audio and video equipment and output Dolby Digital Surround Sound to drastically enhance your games playing/film viewing pleasure. Right then, you've got the greatest console on the planet and a shelf full of class games, so why are you squinting at a fourteen inch TV while you play? If you take your gaming seriously it may be time to dig into your pockets and fork out on some serious play-enhancing kit. That's why we've scouted out the ultimate home gaming set-up and a more modest, but nevertheless impressive, alternative for those who prefer to avoid bankruptcy.

TOTAL PRICE: £23,989

THE ULTIMATE SET-UP

This is the total, jaw-dropping package. If money is simply not an issue, this is the set-up for you. In fact, it will have your friends in jealous tears and your neighbours' kids licking the windows as you batter life-size *Tekken* opponents in glorious plasma-vision. [Or enjoy classic *Baywatch* episodes in frame-by-frame slo-mo. Yaaaassssmmmmllllnnn].



PIONEER PDP 503 50" PLASMA TV £8990

Unlike projectors, plasma screens offer true colours without washy hues. This is the first plasma to compete with the traditional Cathode Ray Tube televisions that are a world standard. The PDP503 has a screen to die for. Mount it on brackets so it's flush against your wall and slobber over the frighteningly sharp picture quality. Tasty – but then, it should be at that price.



KEF REFERENCE 202C CENTRE SPEAKER £999

The model 202C works alongside the 205 and 203 speakers and provides the heart of the projected sound. As the central speaker it is crucial. With such a high quality output it locks the action to the screen, so while peripheral audio flutters around the other speakers, you're glued to cut scenes and battle action.

KEF REFERENCE 205 FRONT AND 203 REAR SPEAKERS £7000

These beauties perfectly complement the 202C centre speaker and complete the whole digital sound experience. They benefit from UniQ technology, which basically allows the sound to emanate from a precise point, enabling the speaker to generate perfect sound over a much wider area. They're an attractive feature for the lounge, too.



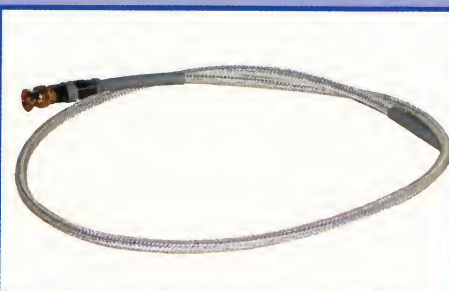
TAG MCLAREN AVANT GARDE 100X5R POWER AMPLIFIER £2500

Still the best amp around, a fact reflected in the staggering price. Whether you're gaming, watching movies or listening to music the sound delivered is clean and current rich, meaning it can pump out super-powerful audio. It's also a rare piece of technology who's weight reflects its value. This fella is heavy. It's also expandable to seven channels, stat fans.



TAG MCLAREN AVANT GARDE AV32BEX SOUND PROCESSOR £3000

This kit will gear you up for perfect home cinema entertainment. The processor supports every home cinema system you can imagine and it pairs perfectly with the Tag power amp. With its future proof technology it should also last you a number of years. Thank goodness.



NORDOST VALHALLA OPTICAL CABLE £1500

Constructed of extruded silver one crystal wide intertwined with premium grade Teflon, this lead carries a nigh-on perfect signal at 96% the speed of light. It's a wire that's the same price as a car!

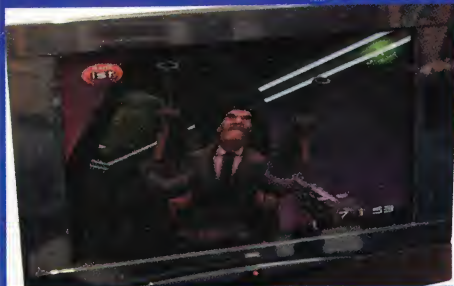
With PS2 as the central hub of a home entertainment system you can turn the gaming (and DVD watching) experience into a bone-shaking, eye-melting audio-visual extravaganza. And here's how...



TOTAL PRICE: £1669

THE BUDGET SET-UP

OK, it's hardly 'budget' in the Poundstretcher sense. We're talking about getting a truly enviable gaming set-up for a price that most people could afford if they wanted it badly enough (how's your credit rating by the way?). The TV is fantastic, the rest of the kit is top quality, and this lot won't require a lounge the size of Hugh Hefner's pool to house it.



LOEWE XELOS 28" TV £899

A superb 100Hz television with a spanking tube set in a Phillips chassis, the Xelos is an impressive piece of kit and modestly priced considering its quality. You can pick up the 24" model of this beauty for £50 less, but it hardly seems worth the saving. And it comes in Graphite or Arctic (that's black or silver to you).



CELESTION AVP 300 SURROUND SOUND SYSTEM £300

For a lovely surround sound system, £300 seems a pretty darned good price. And you certainly get a lot for your money. The sub-woofer is of an extremely high standard and the five satellite speakers can be wall- or stand-mounted to provide a subtle but powerful enhancement to the gaming experience.



CHORD OPTICHORD OPTICAL TOSLINK CABLE £40

A length of fibre optic cable that can hook your PS2 to your entertainment system to create crisp, clean audio. Such upgrades are hardly essential, but every such improvement will sharpen the output standard that extra bit. This is a top class product.



HARMAN KARDON AVR3000 AV RECEIVER £430

This well-priced hub for your surround sound experience includes an integrated AV amplifier and lets you choose from a range of preset acoustic settings, such as 'stadium' and 'jazz club'. It's a great home entertainment all-rounder with a five channel output and 5.1 Dolby Digital support.

GLOSSARY

1. TV

PS2 can connect to TVs via an RFU, a superior S-Video connection or an even more superior RGB SCART. A HDTV (High Definition Television) output option is also included – although the technology is still several years away.

2. Centre Speaker

Used mainly for the dialogue track, so actors can be heard clearly over the sound effects.

3. Front Left/Right Speakers

Provide ambient stereo effects.

4. Rear Left/Right Speakers

Independent from the front speakers, providing the additional ambient effects.

5. Subwoofer

Optional, but really worth it for the bone-rattling booms, rumbles and explosions it creates.

6. Surround Sound Processor

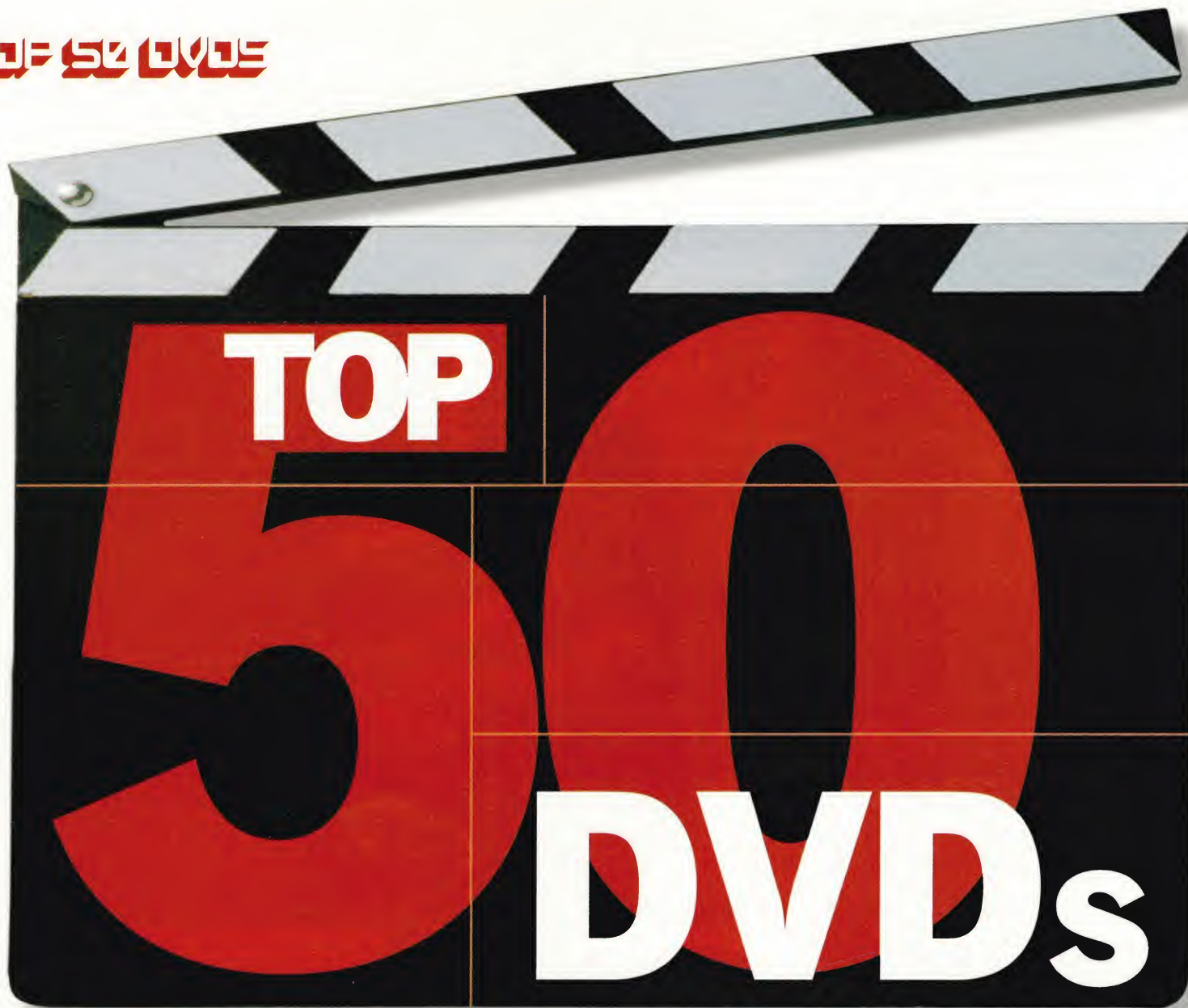
Processes the Dolby Digital/DTS signals from the DVD and converts into six separate audio signals for the amp. Mid-price systems combine the processor and power amp into a single unit.

7. Power Amp

Provides the speakers with souped-up digital signals direct from the Surround Sound processor.

8. PlayStation 2

Sony's rather smashing home entertainment machine. You've probably heard of it...



The PS2 isn't just about games and the DVD films it can also play aren't just about movies. The extra features included on the best DVDs are a vitally important part of making a quality package and here we present our Top 50 examples of great movie – great extras – great DVD. Don't be perturbed if your film favourite isn't here, *GoodFellas*, say, or *Citizen Kane* or maybe even *Weekend At Bernie's*, it's certainly not because the movie isn't good enough, it's because the DVD isn't good enough...

50 THE SHAWSHANK REDEMPTION



VCI
£9.99

Film: Andy Dufresne (Tim Robbins) is wrongly imprisoned for murder and sentenced to life. With the help of fellow lifer Red (Morgan Freeman) he learns to overcome the brutalities of prison and look inside himself for the



one thing the authorities can't touch – hope. A film about friendship, this is a beautifully observed, expertly crafted film that tugs on the heartstrings.
Extras: Short interview clips. Not much but forgivable for a movie this great.

48 SCARFACE



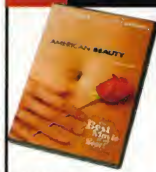
Columbia TriStar
£19.99

Film: Cuban emigre Tony Montana (Al Pacino) arrives in Miami and embarks on a violence and drug-fuelled crime odyssey. Packed with unforgettable moments – from the chainsaw bloodbath to the grandiose "Say hallo



to my leetle friend!" finale – this is a tragicomic classic of 1980's excess.
Extras: 17 minutes of deleted scenes rightly cut from an already overlong film, and an excellent documentary with contributions from all the main players.

49 AMERICAN BEAUTY



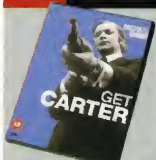
Universal
£19.99

Film: Kevin Spacey is Lester, a respectable husband who hits a mid-life crisis and quits his job to smoke pot and fantasise about his daughter's best friend. His predicament, a cry for help masquerading as defiance, is



echoed by the secret fears of every character in the film. A funny, poignant movie deserving of all its huge acclaim.
Extras: Behind-the-scenes featurette. Commentary by Director Sam Mendes and Writer Alan Ball. Storyboard feature.

47 GET CARTER



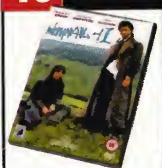
Warner Home Video
£19.99

Film: Michael Caine's most iconic role as the vicious gangster Jack Carter, heading oop North to find the man who killed his brother and throw Corrie's Alf Roberts off a multi-storey car park. "You're a big man but you're in



bad shape. I do this for a living."
Extras: Commentary by Caine, Director Mike Hodges and Cinematographer Wolfgang Pichler. And an isolated music score of Roy Budd's classic groovy soundtrack.

46 WITHNAIL & I



Anchor Bay
£19.99

Film: Bruce Robinson's hilariously downbeat portrait of two impoverished actors (Richard E. Grant, Paul McGann) taking a country holiday at the fag end of the Sixties is a British classic. Let's face it, nowhere else have rambling

drug dealers, fey thespians and portly homosexual relatives combined to such memorable comic effect.

Extras: *Withnail and Us* documentary on the origins of the film. Commentary by Paul McGann and Ralph Brown.

44 THE WIZARD OF OZ



Warner Home Video
£19.99

Film: You may remember it from your childhood as a daft musical with people dressed (badly) as lions, tin men and scarecrows, but this is in fact a glorious monument to the golden era of Hollywood with humour, pathos, ace

songs and a charming performance from Judy Garland at the centre. Oh, and it features evil flying monkeys.

Extras: Bags of stuff covering every aspect of the production including a documentary and rare outtakes.

42 BATTLE ROYALE: LIMITED EDITION



Tartan Video
£29.99

Film: Incendiary sociological horror from veteran Japanese director Kinji Fukasaku. Classmates are dropped off on a remote island and ordered by law to fight to the death until only one remains. What follows is a compelling

dissection of youthful morals with skip-loads of bloody slaughter and naughty schoolgirls in uniform.

Extras: A bonus disc of goodies featuring interviews, an alternative ending and an in-depth documentary.

40 IT'S A WONDERFUL LIFE



Universal
£17.99

Film: Often thought of as a sentimental movie, ideal for cosy Christmas viewings, Frank Capra's masterpiece is actually an extremely dark film for 90% of its running time. James Stewart is a good man facing financial ruin who

believes his life has been wasted and it would be better if he'd never been born – until guardian angel Clarence shows him he's the "richest man in town".

Extras: Intro by and interview with Frank Capra Jr. Making Of documentary.

38 THIS IS SPINAL TAP



MGM
£19.99

Film: The world of Metal was never the same again after this classic spoof documentary of life on tour with fading (fictional) British rockers, Spinal Tap. Stupid haircuts, delusions of grandeur, constant squabbling, declining

audiences, amps that go up to eleven, tiny Stonehenge sets – it's got the lot.

Extras: Over an hour's worth of priceless deleted footage. Commentary by the three leads, an interview with director Rob Reiner, four Tap Videos.



TOP FIVE

COMING SOON

OVDOS

Pre-order for future viewing pleasure.



E.T. The Extra Terrestrial

Spielberg's classic finally arrives in a bumper package including the new Director's Cut (Oct 28).



Blade Runner

The ultimate Director's Cut of Ridley Scott's sci-fi opus is out next year, along with a shadload of tasty extras (TBC 2003).



Star Wars Episode II: Attack of the Clones

Feature-packed two-disc outing for Lucas's second and far, far superior Star Wars prequel (Nov 11).



Back To The Future

The whole Eighties time travel escapade complete with tons of special features (Dec 2).



Spider-Man

Entertaining and stylish superhero fare from Sam Raimi. The two-disc set is rammed with extra web-slinging goodies (Nov 25).

TOP 50 OVDOS

45 THE MAN WHO WASN'T THERE



Entertainment In Video
£19.99

Film: Film noir gets the Coen Brothers treatment in this everyday story of a monosyllabic barber who blackmails and accidentally murders his wife's lover in order to raise funds for a move into the dry cleaning business. Billy Bob

Thornton is mesmerising in the lead and the movie is yet further evidence that the Coens can simply do no wrong. **Extras:** On-set footage and interviews, a superb commentary from Billy Bob and the Coens, plus deleted scenes.

43 SOME LIKE IT HOT



MGM
£19.99

Film: Commonly voted the best comedy movie of all time by critics (narrowly in front of *Freddy Got Fingered*), Billy Wilder's gangster musical cross-dressing farce is as funny now as it was forty years ago. Marilyn

Monroe, Tony Curtis and Jack Lemmon make a faultless comic trio, and then there's THAT closing line. Near perfect. **Extras:** Interview with Tony Curtis. A reunion of the movie's Sweet Sue band, and a behind-the-scenes photo gallery.

41 THE WICKER MAN



Warner Home Video
£24.99

Film: Unique British horror involving pagan sacrifice (and nude folk dancing) on a sinister Scottish island. Like *Straw Dogs* and *American Werewolf in London*, Robin Hardy's cult favourite exploits the indisputable fact

that Britain's remote rural areas are filled with murderous inbred weirdos. **Extras:** The exhaustive *Wicker Man* Enigma documentary, a group commentary, plus interviews with Robin Hardy and Christopher Lee.

39 AMELIE: SPECIAL EDITION



Momentum
£24.99

Film: Jean-Pierre Jeunet's offbeat romantic comedy, following the titular Parisien as she attempts to bring joy to other peoples' lives, is not quite the saccharine experience you may expect. Filled with obsessive oddball characters

and surreal visual flourishes, it's a stunningly imaginative, unpredictable treatment of a usually mindless genre. **Extras:** Director's interview and commentary, several featurettes including a great Making Of.

37 MASH



Fox
£19.99

Film: Scarabrous military satire following the crazy antics of a US army surgeons assigned to a mobile hospital in war-torn Korea. Robert Altman's trademark mix of ensemble cast and episodic structure has rarely been more

effective, and that's saying something. Much better than the very good TV series it spawned. **Extras:** Two excellent documentaries, featurettes and an audio commentary from Robert Altman.

36 THE FRENCH CONNECTION I & II



Fox
£29.99

Film: Gritty crime series starring Gene Hackman as renegade cop Popeye Doyle hunting French drug smugglers through a cold, dirty New York and back to sunny Marseille. These are the sort of intelligent, edgy and



unpredictable action movies Hollywood used to make before undergoing a frontal lobotomy in the early Eighties. **Extras:** Commentaries by the directors and lead actors, deleted scenes, and two cracking Making Of documentaries.

35 REAR WINDOW



Universal
£17.99

Film: It's difficult to believe that watching a suspicious neighbour through a window for almost the entire duration of a movie could make for gripping cinema. But in the company of noney-neighbour James Stewart and



with Hitchcock's masterful direction, *Rear Window* is a suspense classic. **Extras:** A retrospective documentary. An interview with the screenwriter John Michael Hayes. And an art gallery of on-set photos (mostly of Grace Kelly).

34 FIGHT CLUB



Fox
£24.99

Film: David Fincher's tour de force packs a knockout visceral and intellectual punch. Edward Norton plays the Insomniac salaryman who is rescued from his numb existence by Tyler Durden (Brad Pitt), a wise-cracking,



soap-selling anarchist. What follows is an extraordinary, subversive farce, that'll disorientate you for weeks. **Extras:** Cast and crew commentary. Behind-the-scenes vignettes. Deleted scenes, art galleries and loads more.

33 CROUCHING TIGER, HIDDEN DRAGON



Columbia TriStar
£19.99

Film: Young lovers separated by social standing and two devoted samurai unable to admit their true feelings, are propelled together when ancient sword The Green Destiny is stolen. Equal parts doomed romantic epic and martial arts



extravaganza, *CTHD* is a magical achievement in both departments. **Extras:** Commentary by director Ang Lee and writer James Schamus. *Unleashing the Dragon* documentary, and an Interview with Michelle Yeoh.

32 DR STRANGELOVE



Columbia TriStar
£19.99

Film: As the US surges toward accidental nuclear war an ex-Nazi scientist offers a last chance for the survival of the human race. A groundbreaking political satire from two geniuses: director Stanley Kubrick and



comic legend Peter Sellers taking on four roles, including the eponymous wheelchair-bound nutter. **Extras:** Making Of documentary, featurette on Kubrick, interviews with Peter Sellers and George C. Scott.

31 THE THIRD MAN



Warner Home Video
£19.99

Film: All-time classic expressionistic thriller from director Carol Reed and writer Graham Greene. Joseph Cotten arrives in post-WWII Vienna to attend the funeral of his friend Harry Lime only to discover that his enigmatic pal



(played brilliantly by Orson Welles) is alive and on the run in the shadowy underbelly of the city. **Extras:** Introduction by Peter Bogdanovich, newsreel footage of the film's composer Anton Karas and more.

30 MONTY PYTHON AND THE HOLY GRAIL



Columbia TriStar
£19.99

Film: This joyfully surreal re-working of Arthurian myth is probably the silliest and most accessible of the Monty Python movies. Killer bunnies, raspberry blowing Frenchmen and limbleck knights queue up to provide the classic



comedy moments, and the depiction of medieval Britain – disease, poverty, shit everywhere – is strangely accurate. **Extras:** Two discs jammed with documentaries, Python commentaries and random sketches.

29 TWELVE MONKEYS



Universal
£17.99

Film: In a near-future dystopia, Bruce Willis is sent back to the Nineties to try and find the source of a plague that killed millions and forced society underground. Boasting a career-best turn from Bruce, this is a typically



imaginative Terry Gilliam movie that bends time and perception to magnificent effect. **Extras:** *The Hamster Factor*, a fantastic 87 minute documentary shot during the making of the movie.

28 THE THING



Columbia TriStar
£19.99

Film: Frozen in Antarctica for centuries, a savage alien organism thaws out just in time to work its way through Kurt Russell's research team. Able to adopt the characteristics of any host, nothing is safe from the Thing and there's no



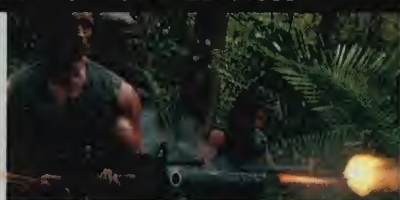
telling who its next victim will be, resulting in an unbearably tense, uncompromising sci-fi masterpiece. **Extras:** 80 minute documentary. An entertaining commentary by Russell and director John Carpenter. Outtakes.

27 PREDATOR: SPECIAL EDITION



Fox
£22.99

Film: In which Arnie and his army of psycho pals bundle into a South American forest and get butchered by a monster that's part killer alien, part living embodiment of the vagina dentata myth. John McTiernan keeps



the tension as tight as planowire, and the lambs to the slaughter narrative is morbidly compelling. **Extras:** Two-disc set includes director's commentary, deleted scenes and several behind-the-scenes featurettes.



TOP FIVE TV SERIES OVDs

Watch stuff on TV that you first saw on... TV!



24
Fox/£44.99
Re-live poor Jack Bauer's longest day over and over again with this six-disc set of the smash hit series.



The Sopranos Season One
Warner/£59.99
The masterful mafia series that puts the angst back into gangster.



Buffy The Vampire Slayer Season Four
Fox/£79.99
Buffy goes to college, Willow goes sapphic and Angel just goes.



Angel Season Two
Fox/£79.99
The breakout second series of the dark, funny *Buffy* spin-off, available in a lush six disc box set.



The X-Files Season Four
Fox/£89.99
A favourite of X-Philes. Lots of series mythology as well as creepy one-offs.

26 CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE THIRD KIND



Columbia TriStar
£22.99



Film: The aliens are coming and, because it's the 70s, they're a peaceful bunch, fond of disco lights and five note musical arrangements. Touching, believable, and capped by a justifiably celebrated finale, *Close Encounters* is a

prime example of Spielberg's ability to inspire childlike wonder.

Extras: An extensive 100 minute documentary. A short, on-set featurette. And seven deleted scenes, including the famous alternative ending.

24 THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE UGLY



MGM
£15.99



Film: Sergio Leone's masterful Dollars Trilogy reaches its epic conclusion with Clint Eastwood, Lee Van Cleef and Eli Wallach caught up in the madness of the US Civil War while searching for hidden gold. The epitome of the

Spaghetti Western sub-genre and an extremely strong candidate for the title 'Best Film Ever Made'.

Extras: 14 minutes of deleted footage includes great scenes like Eastwood lying half-dead in the blistering desert.

22 THE EXORCIST



Warner Home Video
£15.99



Film: Banned in the UK, picketed by Christians who felt it was Satanic and by Muslims who felt it was a recruitment ad for Christianity. Look beyond the controversy and this tale of the demonic possession of a twelve

year-old girl is one of the few genuinely unsettling horror films ever made.

Extras: Mark Kermode's definitive *Fear Of God* documentary. Interviews and commentaries by director William Friedkin and writer William Peter Blatty.

20 THE SILENCE OF THE LAMBS



MGM
£24.99



Film: In the hunt for serial killer Buffalo Bill, FBI rookie Clarice Starling is sent to interview genius psycho Hannibal 'The Cannibal' Lecter, to help her track down the killer. At its best in the electrifying confrontations between Starling and

Lecter but also totally absorbing in its more traditional thriller elements, this is an intelligent, captivating crime film.

Extras: An hour-long cast and crew documentary. 21 deleted scenes plus an amusing, but brief, Outtakes Reel.

18 BUTCH CASSIDY & THE SUNDANCE KID



Fox
£19.99



Film: This true story of two outlaws being tracked across America by a posse of sinister lawmen is one of the all-time great Westerns. Peppered with constant bursts of action and humour, the relationship between sharp-talking

Butch [Paul Newman] and sharp-shooting Sundance [Robert Redford] is a joy to behold.

Extras: Commentary. An excellent documentary and 30 minutes of interviews with the main cast and crew.



TOP FIVE MUSIC

OVOS

Sensational sounds.
Bootylicious visuals.



The Beatles:
Yellow Submarine
MGM/£19.99

Surreal animated fun with Blue Meanies and classic Beatles tracks.



Britney Spears: Live
From Las Vegas
Jive/£17.99

The saucy songbird performing from her 'mature' third album.



Elvis Presley: The
Essential Collection
Universal/£22.99

Huge collection of hits from the King spanning his entire career. Ah-huh-huh.



Destiny's Child:
The Platinum's On
The Wall
Sony/£19.99

Look, it's got Beyoncé in it. What more do you want?



The Old Grey
Whistle Test
BBC/£24.99

Two disc set of classic performances from the Seventies music TV show.

TOP 50 DVD

25 LA CONFIDENTIAL



Warner Home Video
£15.99



Film: In 1950s LA, three cops investigate a shoot-out at a cafe that is somehow linked with celebrity-lookalike hookers, scandal rags and missing drugs and eventually leads all the way back to the LAPD. A terrific movie that manages to

capture all the violence, intrigue, labyrinthine plotting and period detail of James Ellroy's superlative novel.

Extras: Three featurettes the best of which interviews the cast, crew and Elroy. An interactive location tour.

23 DIRTY HARRY



Warner Home Video
£19.99



Film: After making his name as The Man With No Name, Clint Eastwood moved on to his second iconic role: cop on the edge 'Dirty' Harry Callahan. A man at odds with authority and the hippy overtones of the era, Harry

focuses his anger on bringing psychotic killer Scorpio to justice – even if it means breaking every rule in the book. **Extras:** Documentaries, *Dirty Harry The Original* and *Celebrating Thirty Years of an American Hero*, plus interviews.

21 RAGING BULL



MGM
£19.99



Film: Martin Scorsese's harrowing true story of the life and career of boxer, Jake 'The Bronx Bull' La Motta (Robert De Niro) is an unbearably powerful, surprisingly moving portrayal of a man at war with himself. Easily the best film

of the Eighties and it remains a career pinnacle for everyone concerned.

Extras: Making of documentary, *Jakes Jokes* (seven gags from La Motta's cabaret act), *Movietone* news footage of a La Motta fight. Photo gallery.

19 DIE HARD: SPECIAL EDITION



Fox
£24.99



Film: The movie that wrestled the action blockbuster away from Sly and Arnie, and introduced a whole new 'cop-trapped-in-confined-space-with terrorists' mini-genre. Great pacing, tons of action and Bruce Willis's charismatic

hero John McClane combine to make this an enduring ride. And Alan Rickman is great as the dastardly German baddie.

Extras: Three commentaries, deleted scenes, outtakes and a couple of ace interactive editing workshops.

17 THE GREAT ESCAPE: SPECIAL EDITION



MGM
£15.99



Film: The perennial bank holiday favourite may have a whiff of over-familiarity but it's an absolute masterpiece nonetheless. Packed with memorable scenes (Steve McQueen's thwarted getaway, Charles Bronson's

attack of claustrophobia, great performances and a rousing, classic score, this is irresistible entertainment.

Extras: Three documentaries covering the movie and the real-life events that inspired it. Cast & crew commentary.

16 VERTIGO



Columbia TriStar
£19.99



Film: Hitchcock meets Freud in this haunting psychological thriller. Identity and desire as well as the eponymous fear of heights are all examined when retired cop, James Stewart attempts to create a twin of the woman he loved

and lost. Impossible to describe, once seen, it's impossible to forget.
Extras: Obsessed With Vertigo, a documentary about the restoration of the film. Plus a commentary by the restorers and original crew members.

15 TAXI DRIVER



Columbia TriStar
£19.99



Film: Martin Scorsese's and writer Paul Schrader's vision of hell as NYC seen through the eyes of crazy cabbie Travis Bickle (De Niro), is a powerful, disturbing landmark in cinema. A loner, adrift from society, Travis applies his perverse

morality to cleaning up the city streets and saving a young prostitute (Jodie Foster) from her dead-end life.
Extras: A fantastic 70 minute Behind The Scenes documentary. Storyboard to film comparison. Original screenplay.

14 THE TERMINATOR



MGM
£24.99



Film: Directed by the man responsible for Piranha 2: Flying Killers and starring an ex-Mr Universe with more muscle than acting talent, The Terminator somehow overcomes these unpromising origins. Thrilling from start

to finish, the movie's just as relentless as the cyborg killer of its title.
Extras: Stills gallery, Nine deleted scenes. A Retrospective featurette with James Cameron and Arnie. Plus a Cost and Crew Recollections documentary.

13 TERMINATOR 2: JUDGEMENT DAY



Momentum
£24.99



Film: James Cameron's blockbuster sequel combines state of the art CGI effects with a genuinely absorbing story – a feat that has rarely been achieved since in the world of big budget action movies. Arnie is the bad Terminator

turned good, Robert Patrick is the evil T-1000. In the middle are a mother and son trying to prevent nuclear apocalypse.
Extras: Three lengthy documentaries, a bundle of featurettes, outtakes, etc, and a group commentary.

12 GLADIATOR



Columbia TriStar
£24.99



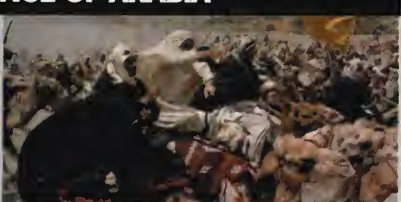
Film: Ridley Scott's Oscar-winning behemoth is a triumphant return to the sword and sandals formula with Russell Crowe in a star-making performance as Maximus, the general reduced to a slave, determined to have his revenge

on the evil Emperor Commodus who murdered his family.
Extras: Director's commentary, two documentaries, an interview with composer Hans Zimmer and a bunch of interesting deleted scenes.

11 LAWRENCE OF ARABIA



Columbia TriStar
£24.99



Film: The epic of epics from David Lean. Shot on location in the desert, a cast of, literally, thousands was used to illustrate the perversity and determination of one man who took on the Axis, the Arabs, the Allies and,

ultimately, himself and beat them all. Director Lean's obsessional drive for perfection echoed Lawrence himself.
Extras: A fine Making Of documentary, four featurettes and galleries. Plus an interview with Steven Spielberg.

10 JAWS



Universal
£19.99



Film: Unless you've seen it recently, you probably won't realise just how magnificent Jaws actually is. A film that has everything – scares, laughs, action, tension, you name it and it's here – what ultimately makes this one of

cinema's greats is the beautifully-judged relationship between the three shark hunters, Brody, Quint and Hooper.
Extras: A genuinely enthralling 50 minute documentary. Ten deleted scenes, outtakes, storyboards.

9 THE USUAL SUSPECTS



MGM
£22.99



Film: At last, a DVD package worthy of this awesome, labyrinthine thriller – part crime caper, part existential meditation on the nature of evil. A gang of crooks gather for a mega-buck job, hired by the mysterious Keyser Soze. But who is

he and what does he really have in store for the hapless crew? Find out in one of the finest films of the Nineties.
Extras: Two commentaries, deleted scenes, three featurettes and an in-depth interview-based Making Of.

8 PULP FICTION: SPECIAL EDITION



Buena Vista
£22.99



Film: Tarantino ripped up the 'three act' rule book with his episodic, non-linear romp revolving around a smackhead gangster's moll, a fighter who refuses to take a fall, and of course two bickering hitmen. Darkly comic, violent and

cooler than Steve McQueen in a Capri, Pulp Fiction is the director's most arresting and innovative work so far.
Extras: Another voluptuous two disc set with deleted scenes, featurettes, galleries and a superb Making Of.

7 SE7EN



Entertainment In Video
£19.99



Film: A serial killer creates a homicidal work of art by murdering people according to the Seven Deadly Sins. David Fincher's disturbing classic is a relentless journey into rain-soaked hell. With a rare intelligence both in theme

and execution, by that infamous ending you'll be reeling in shock.
Extras: Four commentaries, Exploration of the Opening Title Sequence feature, early storyboards, deleted scenes, extended takes and loads more.



TOP FIVE COMEDY SERIES

OVOS

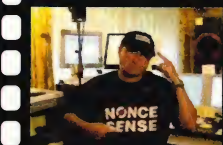
Essential, rib-tickling comedy classics.



Peter Kay's Phoenix Nights
Channel Four/£19.99
Surreal and brilliantly-observed working men's club antics rolls onto DVD.



The Simpsons: Season Two
Fox/£39.99
The series matures from promising beginnings to genuine genius.



Brass Eye
Video Collection/£19.99
Shocking, hilarious satire from Chris Morris. Includes the infamous Paedophile Special.



Fawlty Towers
BBC/£34.99
All twelve episodes of the greatest sitcom Britain has ever produced. Timeless farcical anarchy.



League of Gentlemen: Series 2
BBC/£19.99
The residents of Royston Vasey return for more sinister in-bred fun.

6 THE MATRIX REVISITED TWIN PACK



Warner Home Video
£24.99



Film: The world as we know it doesn't exist and the human race is living in a virtual reality, created by our computer masters to keep us in ignorant subservience while they harvest us as batteries. Well, the premise of *The Matrix* is certainly more grounded in reality than *Eastenders* and when you add cool shades, kung fu and lots of guns to the action pot, you're looking at one of the best blockbusters in years.

Directed by the Wachowski brothers, the movie is packed with cool influences: fight scenes come direct from Hong Kong kung fu movies; while the sci-fi story and visuals owe a huge debt to numerous cyberpunk graphic novels. All this comes together to make an exhilarating future-noir action flick with Keanu Reeves, Laurence

Fishburne, Carrie Anne Moss et al, excellent as the freedom fighters attempting to break the Matrix.

Extras: The second disc is *The Matrix Revisited*, an exhaustive two hour documentary covering every aspect of the film's production including set design, special effects and where the original idea for *The Matrix* came from, all interspersed with on-set interviews with the cast and crew. There are also several extra features including *The Dance of the Master* a look at legendary fight choreographer of Yuen Wo-Ping, and *What Is To Come?*, a brief glimpse at the forthcoming second instalment in the *Matrix* trilogy. The *Matrix* movie disc also has tons of its own featurettes, documentaries and hidden extras, too. Quite a bit to see, then.

5 THE LORD OF THE RINGS: THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE RING



Entertainment In
Video £24.99



Film: For any non-believers out there, *The Fellowship Of The Ring* is the first instalment in a trilogy about magical rings and Middle-Earth, wherein young Hobbit Frodo Baggins becomes the reluctant bearer of The One Ring – a trinket of unimaginable evil that fell from the finger of the Dark Lord Sauron. To stop Sauron getting his hands on the Ring and bringing darkness to the world, it must be cast into the Cracks of Doom in the realm of Mordor. And so begins Frodo's perilous quest, accompanied by the wizard Gandalf, Gimli the Dwarf, Legolas the Elf, Aragorn, Boromir and his Hobbit friends Pippin, Merry and Samwise.

If the very thought of goblins and orcs makes you want to guffaw, this clearly isn't the film for you. The rest of us can exercise that part of the

brain we call the 'imagination' and get lost in a world of fantasy, magic and epic battles that is nothing short of awe-inspiring. Incredibly faithful to the book and boasting levels of spectacle and character depth that few films in any genre can hope to match, Director Peter Jackson has worked wonders in translating Tolkien's vision to the big screen. Roll on, parts two and three...

Extras: Three hours of goodies, including three documentaries, and 15 featurettes, ranging from interviews with the cast to analysis of the special effects. However, true Rings aficionados might want to wait for the Four Disc Set (12 Nov) which will feature a staggering six hours of extras and a new Director's Cut of the movie.

4 TOY STORY – THE ULTIMATE TOY BOX



Disney
£49.99



Film: The films that revolutionised animated cinema and delighted kids of all ages, the two *Toy Story*s are not just the best animated movies of recent years, they're among the best movies full stop. With a concept toys coming to life once the humans leave the room as old as *Bagpuss*, the originality and joy of these films is in the interaction of its peerless cast of playthings – led by Woody, the bendy old cowboy doll and Buzz Lightyear, the new-fangled spaceman figure.

As well as its delightful humour and cool action set-pieces, there's a large thoughtful streak running through the films that ultimately takes them way beyond kiddies cartoon fare. Namely, the idea that we eventually move on and grow out of things, no matter how much we once loved them.

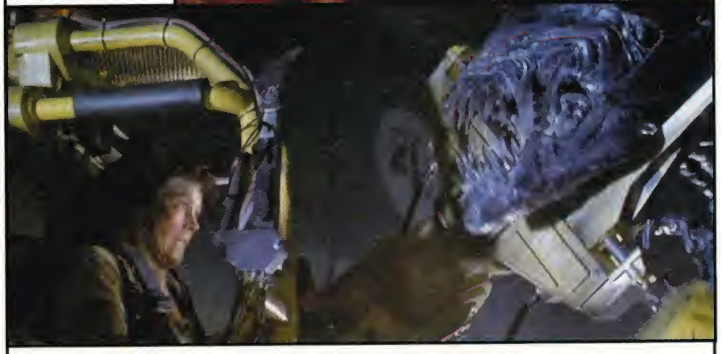
Extras: With an entire third disc chockablock with extras, this box set is one of the most feature-packed DVD releases so far. Going through everything here will take you days and most of it is great stuff. There's an introduction by Pixar chief John Lasseter and his team. A documentary on the history and development of *Toy Story*. Two of Pixar's early short films, *Tin Toy* and *Luxo Jr. Renders Bugs*, a number of scenes that were programmed incorrectly, such as one with Buzz's eyes missing.

Plus: a load of featurettes, commentaries, behind-the-scenes footage, interviews with the enthusiastic Pixar crew, deleted scenes, hilarious staged 'outtakes', pages and pages of character/location designs and an glimpse of Pixar's follow-up movie, *Monster Inc.* Phew...

3 ALIEN LEGACY BOX SET



Fox
£69.99



Film: The *Alien* franchise may be a case of diminishing returns but, alongside *Star Wars*, it's the most consistently entertaining sci-fi series. Ridley Scott's opener is a masterclass in building tension. A haunted house film set in space, it has a quiet, unsettling atmosphere that just makes it all the more shocking when scenes like the chestbuster and the long-awaited disclosure of the fully-grown alien have you jumping off the sofa.

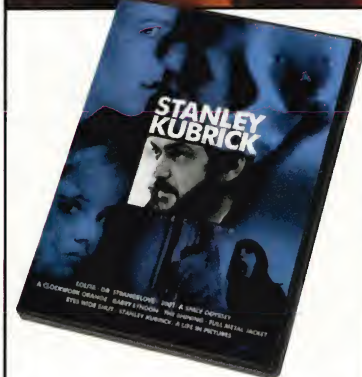
For the exhilarating sequel, James Cameron upped the action and turned Ripley into a fully-fledged bad ass: packing serious heat and taking on the Queen alien bitch face-to-face. And while the third and fourth instalments can't compete with the classics that came before, they're still highly accomplished exercises in action and terror.

Extras: *Alien* boasts the most features. There's a fascinating commentary by Ridley Scott, 10 deleted scenes, including a never-before-seen look at the alien's cocoon. In addition, there are outtakes and a stills gallery with 500 production photos and conceptual artwork.

Alien's best extra is an old interview with James Cameron. There are also eight behind-the-scenes featurettes and a stills gallery. *Alien 3* has a Making Of featurette including interviews with Sigourney Weaver and director David Fincher. *Alien Resurrection* merely has a brief promo featurette.

The cream of this collection's extras is the 66 minute *Alien* documentary DVD, offering detailed insights into every aspect of the production of the first movie with input from everyone involved.

2 THE STANLEY KUBRICK COLLECTION



Warner Home Video/£99.99

Film: Arguably the greatest Movie Director of them all, Stanley Kubrick could never be accused of being a prolific filmmaker but the 12 movies he made during his career represent a peerless body of work. Unlike most Directors who inevitably produce a dud now and again, Kubrick's infamous perfectionism meant he was incapable of making a bad film. Hence the eight movies presented in this superlative boxset can be split into two lofty categories: classics and masterpieces.

The mere classics are *Lolita*, a daring adaptation of Nabokov's ingenious book dealing with Humbert Humbert's love for his teenage

stepdaughter. Vietnam War tour de force *Full Metal Jacket*. And his final film, the gothic psychological drama, *Eyes Wide Shut*, starring Tom Cruise and Nicole Kidman.

The masterpieces are *Dr Strangelove or: How I Learned To Stop Worrying And Love The Bomb*, the best war satire ever made, featuring a three-role comic masterclass from Peter Sellers. The haunting, existential *2001: A Space Odyssey*, the best sci-fi movie ever made. Barry Lyndon, the best period drama ever made. The shocking *A Clockwork Orange*, the best social satire ever made. And *The Shining*, the best horror film ever made.

There isn't room for an in-depth analysis of them all here but suffice to say, they demand to be seen and this collection demands to be bought.

Extra: *Dr Strangelove* has a featurette tracing Kubrick's career, a retrospective documentary and interviews with the stars George C Scott and Peter Sellers. *Making Of The Shining* shot by Kubrick's daughter Vivian during production, is the most candid look at the secretive Director at work we will ever have the opportunity see. While *Eyes Wide Shut* features interviews with Cruise, Kidman and Kubrick's friend and admirer, Steven Spielberg.

EXTRA! EXTRA!

The ninth DVD in the collection is *Stanley Kubrick: A Life In Pictures*. An exclusive 140-minute documentary, it's the definitive account of Kubrick's life using never before seen materials. Narrated by Tom Cruise and boasting contributions from luminaries such as Spielberg, Scorsese, Woody Allen and Peter Ustinov, as well as his close friends and family, this has everything you need to know about the genius Director. As Jack Nicholson puts it: "Everybody pretty much acknowledges he's the man and I still feel that underrated him."



1. Kubrick's photograph of a news vendor mourning the death of President Roosevelt launched his professional career.



2. His first effort at filmmaking: the documentary short *The Day Of The Fight*.



3. Although often portrayed as serious, obsessive and weird, Kubrick was actually a jovial, if extremely private, family man.

1 THE GODFATHER COLLECTION



Paramount/£59.99

Film: An irrefutably magnificent gangster saga, no list of the greatest films of all time is complete without mention of *The Godfather* series. The first movie introduces us to the Corleone family: Godfather Don Vito (Marlon Brando); the wild Sonny (James Caan); timid Fredo (John Cazale); wise, adopted consigliere Tom Hagen (Robert Duvall); and the intense Michael (Al Pacino). A rich, deeply-layered film contrasting the tenderness of family life with the violence of mafia life, *The Godfather* deserves all the acclaim that's been bestowed upon it.

If anything, *Part II* is even better. A complex



study of the moral ties of family and the corrupting influence of power, it moves through time to show the parallel lives of Michael – now head of the family and an increasingly isolated, ruthless Godfather – and his father Vito (Robert De Niro) as a young man, turning to crime back in Sicily and eventually making the journey to America and mafiamdom.

Director Francis Ford Coppola finally completed the story 16 years later, charting Michael's impossible dream to atone for his sins and gain respectability. *Part III* pales in comparison to its predecessors but compared to modern

Hollywood epics, this is a hugely accomplished film and its grandiose Vatican finale is a fitting climax to the saga.

We reckon this collection is the most essential DVD release yet. Watch the trilogy back-to-back and marvel at the breadth and brilliance of Coppola's vision.

Extras: An entire Bonus Materials DVD packed with great extras. This includes a commentary by Coppola; numerous behind-the-scenes featurettes; an hour of additional footage and the fantastic documentary *A Look Inside* (see right).

EXTRA! EXTRA!

The 73-minute documentary *The Godfather Family: A Look Inside* is your one-stop guide to the saga. It features behind-the-scenes footage and casting sessions, production meetings with Coppola plus interviews with all the main cast and crew.



Nag's Head

Coppola reveals that one of the series' most famous scenes – Jack Woltz discovering a severed horse's head in his bed – only came about through a misunderstanding. In the novel, the head is deposited on the bed but Coppola read the passage incorrectly, leading to his far more memorable version.



Casting

Olivier as the don? Robert Redford as Michael? They would've been if Paramount had gotten their way. Dead against Coppola's first choices – the difficult Brando and unknown Pacino – it was only through the Director's refusal to take no for an answer that he got the cast he wanted.

WE'VE BEEN EXPECTING YOU...

The image shows the cover of PSM2 magazine, Issue 28, dated November 2002. The cover features a large portrait of James Bond in a black tuxedo, holding a gun. The magazine title 'PSM2' is prominently displayed in large white letters. The main headline is '007 nightfire' in a stylized yellow and red font. Other headlines include 'BOND IS BACK!', 'SEE THE AMAZING SEQUEL EXPLODE ON TO PS2!', and 'TONS OF EXCLUSIVE-TO-PSM2 ACTION - FOR YOUR EYES ONLY!'. The cover also mentions 'OVER 3 HOURS OF PS2!' and 'THE ULTIMATE MAG + THE BIGGEST DVD! NOBODY DOES IT BETTER!'. A small inset shows a DVD case for '007 Nightfire'. The bottom right corner includes the issue number '34', the price '£3.99', and the website 'gamesradar.com'.

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TOP 10 MUST-OWN PS2 GAMES

Three supremely lucky readers can each win copies of our Top Ten Must-Own PS2 Games (pictured right). A range of superb titles across a variety of genres that no PS2 owner should be without. By the way, you may have noticed that two of our selection – *Pro Evolution Soccer 2* and *GTA: Vice City* – haven't even been reviewed as yet, but we've played them enough to know that both are huge improvements over the originals and definitely deserve a place in the Top Ten.

To be in with a chance of winning just answer the question below and send your entries on a postcard to:

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Or simply email your answers to us at PS2@futurenet.co.uk with the subject marked 'Top Ten Competition'. See below for all the compo rules.

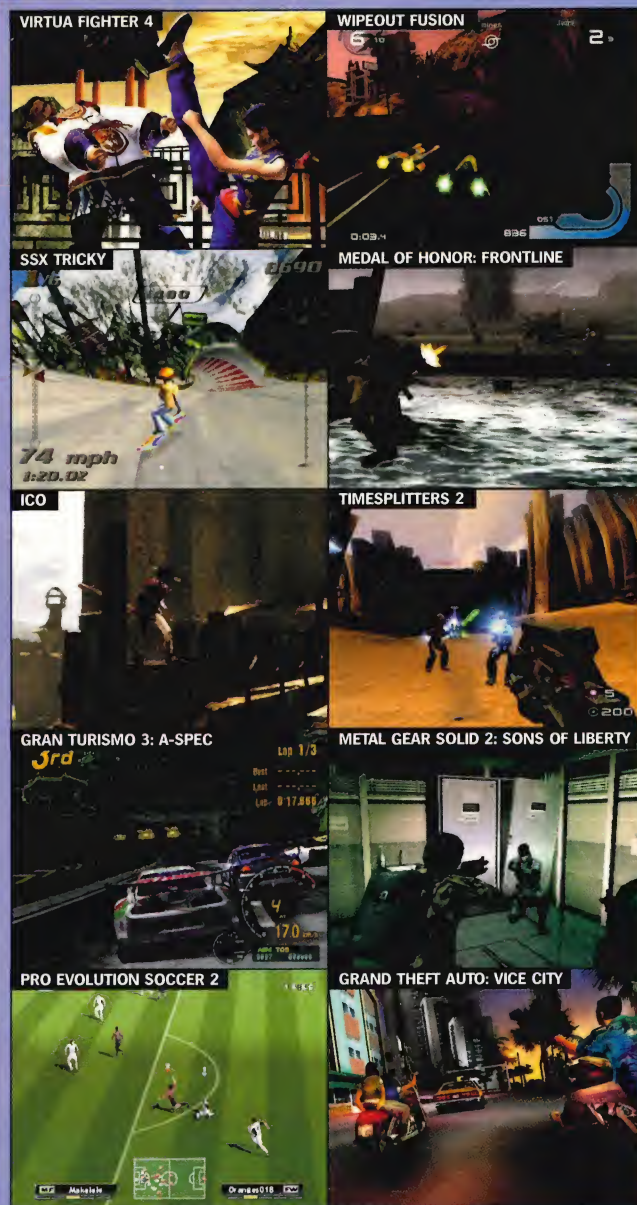
QUESTION:

When was PlayStation 2 launched in Europe?

1. 4 March 2000
2. 24 November 2000
3. 12 January 2001

RULES

- No purchase necessary.
- No correspondence will be entered into.
- No employees of Future Publishing or any affiliated company may enter.
- No cash alternative is offered to these prizes.
- Closing date is 25th November 2002.
- The winners will be informed immediately after the competition closing date.
- If any prize becomes unavailable, Future Publishing reserve the right to replace it with another of equal value.
- Multiple entries will be disregarded.
- The Editor's decision is final.



Can't decide which PS2 games to buy? Well, you've certainly come to the right place. Across the next 84 pages, taking in 11 different gaming genres, we've reviewed ALL 322 games currently available for PlayStation 2. It's the biggest, most comprehensive buyers guide of its kind, meaning you'll no longer have to suffer the indignities of ending up with *Stunt GP* when you actually wanted *Stuntman*. Or, horror of horrors, getting *International League Soccer* because some fool told you it was better than *Pro Evolution Soccer*. We're here to ensure you only invest in the cream of the PS2 crop. And if you take a glance at the competition above, you can even win our Top Ten favourite games. Can't be bad.

LEE HART
 Editor

Lee

REVIEW RATINGS

Here's what our review scores stand for:

- 10/10** Nigh on revolutionary. A game that could change the face of gaming forever
- 9/10** A truly astonishing game. If you have a PlayStation 2, you need this now
- 8/10** Highly recommended
- 7/10** Good, solid fare that's definitely well worth a look
- 6/10** Better than average and ideal for hardcore fans of the genre
- 5/10** An average game
- 4/10** Poor, but has the odd moment
- 3/10** Extremely disappointing
- 2/10** To be avoided
- 1/10** Beer mat

EVERY PS2 GAME REVIEWED

All 322 PlayStation 2 games rated over the following 84 pages.

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GET STUCK IN



RACING GAMES

From the pure driving thrills of *Gran Turismo 3* to the futuristic hovercar combat of *WipEout Fusion*, the ever-popular racing genre is packed with a variety of delights.





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RACING GAMES ROUND-UP



Bumper-to-bumper with the World's Greatest Driving Simulation™. At just £20, there's simply no excuse not to own this beauty.



The lighting and shadow effects are gorgeous, setting the visual standards for the 128bit era.



Rally races offer a reckless brake from tense tarmac driving, letting you get fast and loose with the handling.

GRAN TURISMO 3: A-SPEC



MULTIPLAYER MOTORING

Link up with a pal (or six) for maximum racing fun.

Besides the traditional magic of Arcade's two-player races, *Gran Turismo 3* also introduces the genius that is iLink Battle. Up to six players can battle it out at once – each bringing a TV, a PS2, a link cable, and a copy of the game to the party – and with a sextet of speed freaks all set up in the same room and racing hell for leather, it's one of the greatest and most exciting multiplayer experiences in gaming history.

There's absolutely no slowdown and because you're playing against evil human opponents rather than computer AI, the racing is beautifully unpredictable. It's like playing GT3 in the arcades – except the arcade is in your own home.

We haven't had this much fun since six-player *Daytona USA* and four-player *Gran Turismo* back in the coin-op days of yore. The tragedy is that, as with other link-up games such as *F355 Challenge* on DC and *WipeOut* on PSone, only a few people will ever get to try it out. But even if you can only gather two loads of kit together it's more than worth the hassle, as this really is state-of-the-art and the pinnacle of home multiplayer gaming.

The engine roars, the tyres squeal and the world's greatest driving series accelerates onto PS2. Oh yes, the daddy is here..

Publisher: SCEE Developer: Polyphony Digital
Price: £19.99 Players: 1-2

From the ground-breaking original to the even better sequel, *Gran Turismo* has become a genre defining series, with every racing game in its mighty wake piling in comparison. Now updated for PS2, the expectations were sky high for a game that would combine the glorious visuals the console is capable of with the deep gameplay and fantastic handling of the originals. It doesn't disappoint.

In a perfect marriage, the best driving series ever and the world's best console have got it together and the result is superb. Load it up, watch the flashy intro and breathe a sigh of relief as a familiar menu screen appears with all the options we know and love. Pick a sexy motor (the Skyline GT-R will do nicely), select a favourite track and prepare to breathe your second sigh of relief. The handling is spot on. But that isn't what you'll notice first. While we certainly aren't a bunch of graphics tarts, you'd have to be blind not to be blown away by the menagerie of lighting, scenery and reflections streaming towards your softly weeping eyes. Considering it's still relatively early in the console's life, the visual flair achieved in GT3 is nothing short of spectacular.

Once you've gotten over the staggering visuals you'll find a lovingly created racing extravaganza. Take your car for a spin and you'll discover the excellent handling of the

original, improved with tweaked physics and infused with more speed than a party at Eton. As before, the cars are categorised according to power: beginning with the puny B class and culminating with Special class. There are huge distinctions between the licenses, especially with the Rally class which provides a refreshing change from the cautious driving required for road racing – allowing you to ignore the brake while skidding through corners at top speed. Like nearly everything in the game, it just feels right.

As ever, the racing action is divided into two sections: Arcade and GT mode. Arcade contains Time Attack, Single Race and Free Run, all of which are useful for honing your skills, as well as providing a quick burst of excitement



// The all-encompassing GT mode is so hardcore it makes the Wu-Tang Clan look like S Club//

without the hassle of customisation and earning money. And one of the great pleasures of all racing games, two-player head-to-head, can also be found here.

But despite the charms of Arcade, every *Gran Turismo* fan knows where it's really at. GT3 is a hardcore game for hardcore racers and the all-encompassing GT mode is so hardcore it makes the Wu-Tang Clan look like S Club. Wisely retaining the peerless licensing system, the game demands that you own the correct papers to enter the corresponding tournaments. Winning the licenses is almost a game in itself and those with enough patience and



The loooooong straights of the Laguna Seca circuit make it ideal for the stupidly fast super cars.



The monstrously powerful Nissan Skyline is a great choice for pro drivers, but may intimidate newbies.



driving skills to achieve an all-gold rating are rewarded with a prize car. On the subject of cars, there are considerably less of them than GT2 offered. But then, a tally of 150 beautiful autos is certainly not to be sniffed at and with seriously desirable performance cars like the Aston Martin Vantage and the Lister Storm V12 available, the compulsion to keep racing and keep adding more cash to the coffers until you can afford them is as strong as ever.

If you're looking for flaws then the continued lack of vehicle damage is a shame – slamming your car into a barrier at 200mph without so much as a scratch not only looks daft, but goes against the whole 'realistic' essence of the series. Also, the CPU cars still follow a pre-set routine – one shoots to the front, another hangs around on your tail and the remaining three drive together as a pack. While this makes for competitive racing, it is somewhat predictable.

Despite these problems, *Gran Turismo 3* is the best driving game on PS2. Although its realism may be a big selling point, GT3 quite rightly favours fun over simulation and this is ultimately why it's such a joy to play. If you have even the slightest interest in racing games you need to own this beauty. ■ Lee Hart

GRAN TURISMO 3: A-SPEC

Why we'd buy it:
- Erm, it's the best driving game on PS2
- Still no vehicle damage

Why we'd leave it:
- Tough to master
- Predictable AI
- No vehicle damage

09

PlayStation 2 **VERDICT**

GT CONCEPT: 2002 TOKYO-GENEVA

You've driven *GT3: A-Spec*, now Polyphony invites you to take the limited edition model for a spin.



Reflective bodywork, track sheen and heat haze are all fantastic in *GT Concept*. Pity about the longevity, though.

Publisher: SCEE Developer: Polyphony Digital
Price: £29.99 Players: 1-2

This slick, compact racer is a *Gran Turismo* spin-off, an enhanced version of Polyphony's *GT Concept: Tokyo 2001* released last year in Japan. Not only does it simulate selected production and concept cars from the 2001 Tokyo Motor Show, it also models those from the 2001 Geneva event.

So where *GT3* offered you the chance to drive cars you could never afford, *GT Concept: 2002* tempts you with cars that manufacturers will probably never make. Of the 95 driveable motors, 25 are the wild dreams of car designers. Some prototypes, like Ford's GT40, you'll recognise from *GT3*. Others, like the sleek Chrysler Crossfire, the Hyundai Clix and the next-gen Honda DualNote (which has both electric and combustion engines) you won't. That leaves 70 non-concept production, rally and racing cars to play with.

But *GT Concept: 2002* isn't a case of 'new cars, old game'. In fact, it's almost a case of 'new cars, no game'. There are six main options: Course License, Single Race, 2P Battle, Free Run, Game Status and iLink Battle. To unlock the tracks for the main single-player Racing mode, you first need to obtain a Course License for each one in a pre-selected test car. Veteran *GT* players will find the tracks all-too familiar. There are three Tarmac courses: the Midfield Raceway and Tokyo R246 tracks from *GT3* plus a revamped version of the Autumn Ring circuit from *GT2*. *GT Concept: 2002* also plunders *GT3* for its two rally tracks: Swiss Alps and Tahiti Maze. Each course also comes with a reversed version, upping the track total to a rather unsatisfying ten.

With an optional Pace Car on hand to help you

familiarise yourself with a track's bends and corners, each course has three Clear Times: Bronze, Silver and Gold. Hurtle round a circuit fast enough to win a Bronze trophy and you not only activate the track for the Single Race mode, but you unlock a new car. Win a Gold trophy and you activate the track and two cars – one each for bettering the Bronze and Silver trophy times. With ten tracks to activate and two extra cars to win per track, there are 20 cars to unlock before you even turn your attention to the Single Race mode. Activate all ten tracks and you unlock a bonus 'Pod' race: a three-lap challenge contested by six symmetrically-designed Toyota/Sony concept cars.

Ultimately, *GT Concept: 2002* is a stripped-down *GT3*. Yes it boasts new cars, but these strange motor show mutants must be balanced against what *GT Concept: 2002* lacks – multiple championship modes, the compelling GT option, new courses and weather effects. Five seen-'em-before tracks seems stingy. And no, there aren't any hidden tracks or cars. For newcomers to *Gran Turismo*-ing, however, *GT Concept: 2002* provides a friendly introduction to the PS2's finest racer. This is 'baby' *Turismo*, its high-tech content counterbalanced by friendly options and gently challenging gameplay. ■ Dean Evans

GT CONCEPT: 2002 TOKYO-GENEVA

Why we'd buy it:
- Weird and wonderful cars
- Gorgeous TV-style presentation

Why we'd leave it:
- Glaring lack of depth
- Too easy for veterans
- GT3 is available for £20!

06

PlayStation 2 **VERDICT**

WIPEOUT FUSION

The sci-fi racer that takes more speed than a Royal teenager.



There are eight world zones each featuring six tracks.



Weather conditions such as snow and rain play a visibility-challenging part on later levels.



Using boosts and shortcuts is vital for success.

Publisher: SCEE Developer: Studio Liverpool
Price: £34.99 Players: 1-2

The *Wipeout* designers have always been smart enough to blend all of the elements (visuals, sound, speed, power-ups) to create a perfect all-round feel. For the series' PS2 debut they've mixed the elements better than ever before to produce an incredibly challenging game that looks fantastic, sounds great, moves like a flash and plays like a dream. It's also more flexible, more customisable and far more guarded about its secrets than its predecessors.

The first shock is that, where previous *Wipeouts* have kept only the tougher courses and slinkier ships locked up, here you start with the barest bones of ships, tracks and weapons. The entire design of the single-player game is geared towards unlocking everything through meeting the challenges and picking up medals.

Racing is as sleek, smooth and zippy as ever. Crucially, the handling has been tweaked to make control even more about creative steering, anticipation and instinct. Success is about sharp management: too much speed and you'll bounce off the walls; too much caution and you'll be left far behind.

The basic quick-start is Arcade mode: pick a team and a second pilot and race the first course in any of the three zones. Finish in the top three and a new course will unlock, along with the occasional new weapon/pick-up. In League mode you pick your team and enter a competition over three set courses. Finishing high on the leaderboard is rewarded with credits which can be spent on boosting your craft's potential. Multiplayer is a split-screen affair where everything is customisable. There's also the Innovative Zone mode which lets you submit your hi-scores to a website.

The few problems (dodgy Autopilot, a bit of slowdown on the really complex bits) are niggles which are easily offset by the many pleasures. *Wipeout Fusion* is an instant classic – brilliantly devised and designed, and straight onto the A-list of must-own PS2 titles. ■ Andy Lowe

WIPEOUT FUSION

Why we'd buy it:

- ~ Leaves all the other future racers standing
- ~ Surprising depth

Why we'd leave it:

- ~ Intimidating for casuals
- ~ Pilot 'character' aspect a little underplayed

09

PlayStation 2 VERDICT

WORLD RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP

When it's only you, your co-driver and the track, you'll need every ounce of driving skill to get the best time.



Each surface requires a radically different approach.



The in-car view is more realistic and gives you a greater sense of control.



Take those corners too fast and you could be in trouble. Good job they're wearing helmets...

Publisher: SCEE Developer: Evolution Studios
Price: £19.99 Players: 1-2

Rally tracks are roughly carved from the landscape and full of potential blackspots waiting to snare the unprepared or the unlucky. Every course, run on radically differing surfaces in radically differing climates, is a completely new experience.

WRC recreates this brilliantly. There can be no lapses in concentration. Even if a misjudged right-hand hairpin doesn't send you hurtling off a 50 foot cliff, you're going to lose vital seconds. Some of the longer stages in the game will actually leave you shattered upon completion. Corners where you can simply ease off the throttle and drift around are rare. Most require you to fight through gear changes as

you attempt to brake, turn and accelerate away. Thankfully, the cars steer and manoeuvre exceptionally.

Input from the seven current rally car manufacturers (Ford, Subaru, Citroen, Mitsubishi, Peugeot, Hyundai and Skoda) has been invaluable. You will find, with persistence, that the Peugeot 206 is faster on Tarmac and the Subaru Impreza marginally more stable on gravel, while the Ford Focus (as driven by Colin McRae) is probably the best all-rounder. But whereas in *GT3* the cars are the stars, here the courses are king. A quick spin around the opening stage at Monte Carlo immediately reveals the scope of Evolution's ambition. High on a mountain top, you can see the track stretching into the distance. This is no static background illusion – everything you can see actually exists in 3D. There are 14 rallies in the WRC and here each consists of five stages. When added to multiplayer stages this makes for

around 80 unique stages stretching over 500km end-to-end – a colossal achievement.

World Rally Championship truly understands the essential dynamics of rallying and what makes it a more exciting and involving discipline than F1, or any circuit-based racer for that matter. The PS2 has managed to deliver a realistic racing game with balls. ■ Sam Richards

WORLD RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP

Why we'd buy it:

- ~ Frighteningly realistic
- ~ 500km of varied terrain to race across

Why we'd leave it:

- ~ It's not much use if you dislike rallying

09

PlayStation 2 VERDICT

TOCA RACE DRIVER

The car's the star, right? Not here. *TOCA Race Driver* is a much more human experience...



The AI is superbly realistic. Opponents often make mistakes sending them careering into barriers.

Publisher: Codemasters Developer: Codemasters Price: £39.99 Players: 1-4

Here's what *TOCA Race Driver* doesn't have. There's no glossy TV presentation. No upbeat dance soundtrack. No 'Arcade' mode. Nor are there any indestructible showroom roadsters. What it does have is fast, rule-free driving. It also features realistic tracks from Europe, Japan and Americas, over 30 cars, extreme damage modelling and cinematic race replays. It's also one of the first racing games to weave a lengthy cut-scene-based story into the action.

The introductory *TOCA Tour* sets the tone for the main Career mode. Like all of the competitions, it's essentially a mini-season - 14 drivers contesting six races. You prepare for each race in the team garage where you adjust the car settings to suit the circuit. When it comes to the actual racing, the action is frantic and rarely without incident. Chunky cars jockey for position, bumping and crashing into each other in a manic metal melee. Classy (although not spectacular) visuals bring the action to life as the heavily-liveried cars hurtle around the racetrack. The occasional rain shower adds to the non-stop drama.

Where *TOCA* shines is in its attention to detail. You get helpful chatter from the pit wall as you race, urging you to drive faster or warning you that there's debris on the track ahead. Smash deliberately into a rival driver and he might seek revenge during a later race. Driving is tough and competitive.



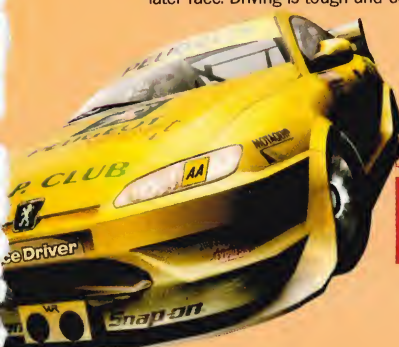
Choose the dashboard view for the ultimate visceral challenge.



A nifty speed blur effect conveys the sensation of raw acceleration.

You'll need to test your car, tweak the settings and drive an almost flawless race to compete against the top drivers. It quickly becomes incredibly difficult, often frustratingly so. Like real racing, perhaps, success is a mixture of skill and luck. You can learn a track inside out and practise until you break the lap record every time. But races can quickly turn into an unofficial destruction derby before you reach the first corner - all spinning spoilers and shattered metal, with you caught in the middle.

There's a lot of game here, and a loooooong learning curve. Whatever else, Codemasters must be praised for giving the CPU drivers balls, for avoiding a stale F1-style procession, and for producing a game that gives as good as it gets. ■ Dean Evans



TOCA RACE DRIVER

Why we'd buy it:
- Competitive racing
- Outrageous damage
- Involving Career mode

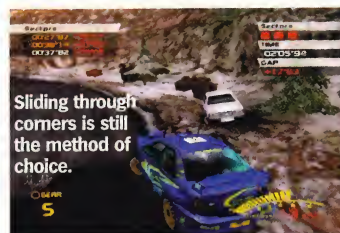
Why we'd leave it:
- Sometimes frustrating
- Fiddly, inconsistent handling



PlayStation 2 VERDICT



Choosing the ideal setup to suit each individual stage is a vital skill. Especially when you're faced with the likes of snowy conditions.



Sliding through corners is still the method of choice.



There's a huge variety of distinct locations to challenge you.

V-RALLY 3

Can this 'unofficial', but undeniably hardcore series mix it with the licensed big boys?

Publisher: Infogrames Developer: Eden Studios Price: £44.99 Players: 1-4 (each player racing in turn)

If you were expecting the lack of an official rally license to take the air out of *V-Rally 3*'s radials you'd be mistaken. The developers have forged a Career mode to be reckoned with - an absorbing, sometimes infuriating, journey from season to season and, with perseverance and skill, from manufacturer to manufacturer.

The season starts with you as a rookie. In order to race, you have to get a contract, so it's off to the PC to check your emails for test drive offers. Then you start driving. Now, nobody would claim that *World Rally Championship* handles like an arcade racer. Nevertheless, it is possible to keep your 'foot' on the gas throughout certain stages with only occasional taps of the brakes. Not with *V-Rally 3*. Fail to respect the laws of physics and you will crash. And given the way your car accrues performance-debilitating damage, you really don't want to do that. If you think that negotiating a breathtakingly tight hairpin at speed is tough, try doing it with a bent axle and knackered brakes. Yes, here's a racing game where the outward appearance of damage really affects the handling.

In the opening 1.6 litre Front-Wheel Drive championship there are five stages to each rally and points accumulate through the season to give you a final position on the table. Fail to hit a target position and your contract will be terminated. Make the grade and you'll not only be given the option to sign on for another season, but you'll also be courted by other teams on the prowl for talent. Keep improving your performance and there's a 2.0 Litre Four-Wheel Drive championship with new events in Germany and Kenya.

Competition is a highly strategic affair. Before the opening stage of each rally you get to adjust various parameters on your car - including tyre type, suspension stiffness, gear ratios, stabilizers, etc. Any tweaks will have to remain into the second stage, even if the weather or road conditions change. So it's vital to think ahead.

V-Rally 3 is a great game and a huge step forward for the series. If there's any criticism it's that the learning curve is initially unforgiving to the point of frustration. However, this is a game that rewards effort and perseverance with genuine satisfaction. ■ Paul Fitzpatrick

V-RALLY 3

Why we'd buy it:
- Great tracks, big challenge
- Talk of gear differentials turns us on

Why we'd leave it:
- No split-screen modes
- Brake pedal? What's a brake pedal?



PlayStation 2 VERDICT

STUNTMAN

Lights! Camera! Traction! Is life as a Hollywood Fall Guy all cunning stunts or crashing boredom?



Publisher: Atari Developer: Reflections
Price: £39.99 Players: 1

This is a driving game with a difference. Unlike Reflections' *Driver* series, it's not a 'go anywhere' type of game. Donning the flameproof suit of a stunt driver, you're dared to complete a series of increasingly demanding vehicular challenges in a range of limited locations. Your efforts will then be spliced together into a film action sequence and eventually into an atmospheric movie trailer. Do your job well and you'll get to work on a movie with a higher budget and more complicated, lengthy stunts. Those of you who still have nightmares about your driving test should be prepared for a terrifying trip down memory lane.

While the game retains the feel of the *Driver* series – smooth and easy handling, striking 3D – the way you play



the game is very different. The Career mode is split into six sections, with each presented as a fictitious film. In each one the player needs to complete a number of stunt sequences, including jumps, skidding close to explosions, performing handbrake U-turns and smashing through those piles of cardboard boxes that movies are so fond of. Egged on by the director, you race against a time limit to complete the objectives. Checkpoints ensure that you keep your speed up, while directional arrows pop up to point you from stunt to stunt. Miss too many manoeuvres and the director yells "Cut!", making you start the sequence over. Almost perfect driving is required – you can't be too slow, wreck your car or take a wrong turn.

Reflections brings its extensive knowledge of damage modelling and car physics to the mix. All of the vehicles in the game have been modelled in extraordinary detail. Every panel and mechanical part can be torn off, dented, shattered



or set on fire. Wheels can also fall off at unfortunate moments and, if you don't drive quickly enough, you'll find out just what happens when a car hits a train.

As you progress in the Career mode, you unlock cars and equipment for use in the Stunt Constructor mode. This vehicular sand-box allows you to design your own outlandish stunts. Set in a giant arena, you can use the cars and the 'toys' you have unlocked to build giant ramps, or to arrange 100 metres of smashable boxes. Watch out for the steam cannon here (it fires cars!), the incredible loop-the-loop track segments and the flaming hoops. Alongside the Stunt Constructor mode, *Stuntman* also features a set of Driving Games. These take place in the same arena and challenge you to collect spinning tokens or to perform feats of speed or precision over extreme obstacle courses.

At *Stuntman*'s heart lies an extraordinary simulation and its subject matter, its impressive graphics and subtle sense of humour combine to make a hugely enjoyable game. At worst it can be tooth-grindingly frustrating. At best it's addictive, challenging and rewarding. ■ Mark Wyatt

STUNTMAN

Why we'd buy it:
- Takes the driving game to new levels
- Just one more go... please!

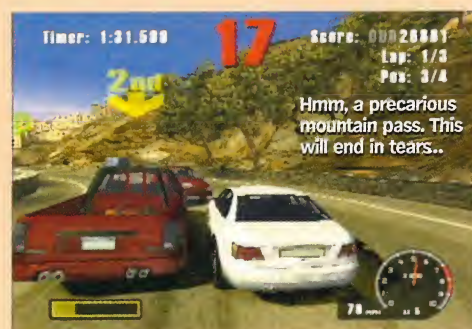
Why we'd leave it:
- It's demanding and linear
- Nature can be a bit much
- Sometimes frustrates



PlayStation 2 VERDICT

BURNOUT

Bored of GT3? Why not try Acclaim's adrenaline-soaked arcade racer for an exciting change of pace?



Publisher: Acclaim Developer: Criterion
Price: £39.99 Players: 1-2

Burnout is knuckle-crunchingly fast. It has detailed backdrops, skiddy handling and hairpin-free courses all conspiring to convey a frightening sense of raw speed. The most thrilling element is the eponymous Burnout. Fill your power-up bar by dodging traffic and hold **LB** to feel your eyes widen as the scenery flashes by in the fabulous motion blur that accompanies your turbo boost.

For extra danger, the streets are peopled with vans and trucks going about their business, and cars tootling along at 50mph. You must also contend with the filthy tactics of three AI opponents, so you'll have to divide your attention between reading the next crossroads, dodging the traffic



and making sure you aren't shunted into a wall.

To progress you must hit various checkpoints, irrespective of your rivals' position, which is inevitably close. That proximity can prove frustrating when a crash after a long, perfect section sees them belting past for the win. The result is a familiar stomach-churning feeling for arcade veterans as you're ever-pushed to produce the perfect run. Such dangerous driving has an obvious and inevitable outcome: spectacular crashes. If you missed them in real-time they're immediately replayed in blood-curdling slow-mo showing every detail of your mangled, spinning car.

But the name of the game is, of course, winning races by avoiding cars and it's only when you master this that you truly begin to enjoy yourself. It's then that clever details pile on the performance pressure, such as the impressive particle effects as dust is thrown up from dirt sections and



vision-obscuring smoke palls from crashes.

The gameplay and handling may be straightforward, but *Burnout* is not devoid of tactics. When you're toe-to-toe with a rival you can nudge them into other vehicles, or oncoming traffic. If it's realism you crave look elsewhere. If it's driving on the edge you're after, the line between glory and disaster has never been thinner. ■ Lee Hall

BURNOUT

Why we'd buy it:
- Adrenaline rush of speed
- Spectacular crashes
- NOT a dull simulation

Why we'd leave it:
- Few original courses
- Insists on perfect run



PlayStation 2 VERDICT



Drive into water and your car becomes a heavily armed boat!



That'll teach him to observe the Green Cross Code.

SPY HUNTER

The Eighties classic returns as a sleek, sexy, subterfuge stunna.

Publisher: Midway Developer: Paradigm Price: £39.99 Players: 1-2 Out: Now

NOSTRA (a gentleman's club with ambitions of world domination) is about to launch the Four Horsemen Of The Apocalypse, a quartet of death affirming satellites. Only the International Espionage Section can stop this diabolical plan and, due to staff cut backs, this boils down to you and a gadget wagon known as the G-6155 Interceptor.

Your quest equals 14 route-based, time limited missions, divided into primary and secondary objectives and set in sexy locations from Panama to... Dover. Take the Florida-based Swamp Venom mission for example. Your primary objective is to destroy a series of NOSTRA owned turbines polluting the local environment. Secondary objectives include preserving civilian life, tagging NOSTRA cargo trucks and picking up SATCOM markers. Now throw bomb dropping helicopters, gun towers and depth charge spilling speedboats into the mix.

Each level is a well-designed, tightly-coiled blast and revisiting incomplete missions to improve performance is

never a chore. The developers have gone to great lengths to hide any linearity with multiple routes. Combine that factor with the constantly replenished threats and the game's modest 14 level tally seems ample. The G-6155's clever controls make the juggling of guided missiles, lasers, electro-magnetic pulse gun and oil slicks a breeze.

There really is nothing else quite like *Spy Hunter* out there. It could be longer, but this is arcade action as God intended. Fast, challenging and addictive. ■ Paul Fitzpatrick

SPY HUNTER

Why we'd buy it:

- It's adrenaline-spiked fun
- You get to blow things up!

Why we'd leave it:

- You can only do one thing at a time
- You don't 'do' retro

08

PlayStation 2 VERDICT

CRAZY TAXI



Publisher: Acclaim Developer: Acclaim/Sega Price: £19.99 Players: 1

The concept of this lively Sega coin-op is simplicity itself: you collect passengers and take them to their destination within the time limit. Extra time is awarded for crazy driving tactics and there are loads of tricks and shortcuts to learn en route. Plus, there are addictive mini-games such as Crazy Balloon (pop balloons with your motor) and Crazy Bowling (use the taxi as, yes, a bowling ball), all of which improve key driving skills. The repetitive nature of the game means you'll tire of it sooner or later, but this is a bright, brash treat while it lasts. ■ RM

CRAZY TAXI

Why we'd buy it:

- It's a classic
- Some of the best arcade action on PS2

Why we'd leave it:

- It's getting on a bit
- Lacking new PS2 features
- Suffers from pop-up

08

PlayStation 2 VERDICT

EXTREME-G 3



Publisher: Acclaim Developer: Acclaim Cheltenham Price: £39.99 Players: 1-2

From the very beginning, two things are clear: this is an extremely polished futuristic racer and it borrows heavily from *WipeOut*. The pumping soundtrack, the swooping circuits, air brakes on the triggers, soundtrack, the swooping circuits, air brakes on the triggers, upgradeable weapons... We've seen 'em all in *Psygnosis'* series. The handling is totally different, though – *E-G 3's* bikes being more twitchy and excitingly unstable than *WipeOut's* hover ships. But, ultimately, even with the subtle differences and despite ten imaginative circuits, this may be too close to *WipeOut* for some people's comfort. ■ KS

EXTREME-G 3

Why we'd buy it:

- Some beautiful circuits
- Gut-implosing speed
- Cool weapons

Why we'd leave it:

- Gets tough very quickly
- Game structure might not please everyone

08

PlayStation 2 VERDICT



Stunt action takes a back seat to speed here, but the tricks on offer are all suitably extreme.

SLED STORM

EA BIG storms back with another bout of snow-based racing mayhem.

Publisher: EA Sports BIG Developer: EA Canada Price: £39.99 Players: 1-2

Before extreme really became *EXTREME!* EA released an enjoyable PSone Skidoo racer called *Sled Storm*, tethered to quaint old notions like realistic sled design. Now *Sled Storm* is reborn and it's an all-singing, nu-metal playing thrill fest.

Courses are designed with velocity, tricks and rule bending in mind. Locations vary from volcanoes to unhinged theme parks, and although there are only seven tracks to unlock, their design is such that you're unlikely to feel short changed – there are so many short cuts in the game.

While trick-pulling is a feature here, unlike *SSX Tricky* it's not a big focus of the game. Tricks are confined to combination presses of the shoulder buttons and given the weight of sled, you find out quickly that two tricks per jump is the most you can expect to pull. The benefits of having a go are huge. Rack up the tricks or hit stray track-side objects and you'll fill up your 'Storm Meter'. When this has life in it you can press **Ⓢ** to trigger a scenery-blurring rocket boost

that is so powerful in inexperienced hands it can prove to be as much of a handicap as it is a potential life saver.

But by far the most thrilling aspect of *Sled Storm* is the tuned gameplay challenge. It's a tough learning experience. When you start you will part company with your sled a lot but as you get more experienced you'll wipe out far less often. This is a game where skill pays and from the frenetic racing to the frat rock presentation, it's everything we've come to expect from the BIG label. ■ Paul Fitzpatrick

SLED STORM

Why we'd buy it:

- We love speed
- We want a powered racing cousin to SSX

Why we'd leave it:

- We don't like skidoo racing
- We like pulling lots of tricks instead

08

PlayStation 2 VERDICT



Animation is zippy AND fog and pop-up free. You might still need the direction arrows, though.

FORMULA ONE 2001

All the stats, drivers, circuits, options and high speed thrills of F1.

Publisher: SCEE Developer: Studio Liverpool Price: £19.99 Players: 1-2

With *Formula One 2001*, the angle is slickness and variety, with the authenticity cranked up so high it would take the most churlish chassis-jockey to spot any omissions. All of the drivers are 'officially' represented: from icy Mikey Schumacher to steady Eddie Irvine and, of course, numerous Scandinavians with overbalanced consonant-vowel surname ratios.

The wealth of game options offers multiple entry-points: Test Drive, Quick Race, Spectator (featuring a computer race which you 'direct'). But the main draw is Championship mode, with an extensive recreation of an entire [2001] season. After selecting a team/driver, it's off to the race weekend, with the option of taking several practice sessions before a timed qualifying run, followed by a warm-up and, finally, the race.

This is where it gets serious: blue, yellow and black flags, time penalties, strategic pit stops, audacious overtaking. As with most other aspects of the game, pit stop strategy can be customised before the race, with the pit crew advising via

radio contact, when and where to pull in. (Still, only a hardcore masochist would turn off the driver's aids.) Control is sharp, although on anything other than cockpit view mode, the driving illusion wobbles slightly - with the cars appearing to turn on a bizarre, floating central axis.

Formula One 2001 is a fine best Grand Prix game. Be warned, though: it is meticulously weighted towards the sim side, and while F1 fanboys will froth for its authenticity, arcade speed freaks should look elsewhere. ■ Andy Lowe

FORMULA ONE 2001

Why we'd buy it:

- Official and authentic
- Masses of options
- Intelligent save options

Why we'd leave it:

- Intimidating
- Poor commentary
- No engaging 'X-factor'

08

PlayStation 2 VERDICT

RUMBLE RACING



Publisher: EA Developer: EA
Price: £39.99 Players: 1-2

Unbelievably, this super brash arcade racer started life as a dull Nascar sim. Now it's jammed with improbable ramps, massive courses, groovy shortcuts, insane power-ups and artificial intelligence that borders on the psychotic. There's also bewilderingly original track design (a Roman amphitheatre rubs happy shoulders with the neon dockland wonderland in *Car Go*) and there's playability afoot that begs extremes of back-breaking, pit-of-the-stomach-yawning stuntage. The more you play *Rumble Racing* the better it gets. ■ IW

RUMBLE RACING

Why we'd buy it:

- It's fast
- It's hilariously enjoyable
- Ace for arcade heads

Why we'd leave it:

- Does not compliment a hangover
- Not for sim bores

08

PlayStation 2 VERDICT

LE MANS 24 HOURS



Publisher: Infogrames Developer: Melbourne House
Price: £39.99 Players: 1-2

Prepare for endurance gaming at its most extreme with this full-on driver based around the famous French racing event. While handling is geared towards accessibility, various demands such as tyre wear are placed on the player to retain realism. The race experience is further enhanced by the impressive draw distance and lighting effects. Ignoring some iffy shadows and jagged edges, the visuals truly shimmer when dusk falls and the stars begin to twinkle. A thrilling, incredibly fast racer with depth and ambition to spare. ■ MW

LE MANS 24 HOURS

Why we'd buy it:

- A wealth of options
- Loads of unlockable stuff
- Instantly accessible

Why we'd leave it:

- A bit raw in places
- No damage
- GT3 is superior

08

PlayStation 2 VERDICT

STAR WARS: RACER REVENGE



Publisher: Activision Developer: LucasArts
Price: £39.99 Players: 1-2

Eight years after the first game, Anakin has sneaked away from his Jedi training to compete in the new pod racing season. The rebellious teen is just one of over 16 pod pilots who turbocharge through five planets worth of treacherous circuits. Surprisingly, the feeling of raw speed in the early races is disappointing. But once you've souped up your pod, the gameplay gets faster, harder, and more aggressive. This is slick, playable and captivating stuff. It's easy to complete but, like the films, filled with extras to keep you coming back. ■ DE

STAR WARS: RACER REVENGE

Why we'd buy it:

- Exciting blink-and-you'll-crash gameplay
- Superbly atmospheric

Why we'd leave it:

- Too easy?
- The 3D is hardly breathtaking

07

PlayStation 2 VERDICT

F1 2002



Publisher: EA Sports Developer: EA Sports
Price: £39.99 Players: 1-2

EA has delivered the most comprehensive F1 title on PS2 so far, providing an experience that can be tailored to any player's skill level. Though most sims have options such as tyre wear and fuel usage, *F1 2002* delivers mechanical failures, the full FIA rules and dynamic variable weather. The casual F1 fan can get straight into the game and begin out-performing Juan Pablo Montoya with the arcade-style setup, while the true F1 aficionado will feel that their sport is being treated with the gravity and sheer detail it deserves. ■ MW

F1 2002

Why we'd buy it:

- All the 2002 stats
- Fully customisable
- For veterans and newbies

Why we'd leave it:

- You've already played too many F1 games
- Frame rate judders

07

PlayStation 2 VERDICT



It ain't what you do
it's the way you
skidoo in this snow-
bound speed freak.



ARTIC THUNDER

Midway turns its frenzied, speed-addled hand to the arctic tundra.

Publisher: Midway Developer: Midway/Inland Productions Price: £39.99 Players: 1-2

On first glance, *Arctic Thunder* looks a bit shoddy. Sure, all the courses you recognise from the arcade original are in there, but the animation is faltering and textures break up all over the place. We've been told countless times that the internal technology of PS2 is just as powerful as coin-op machines so visually at least, this has to go down as a disappointment.

Luckily, as soon as you start playing graphical concerns go out the window. *Arctic Thunder* moves so fast you hardly notice the struggle to push polygons. Luridly-coloured power-ups litter the screen and in your struggle to greedily gather as many of them as possible there's no time to admire the view.

With eight riders in each race, all firing snow bombs at each other simultaneously, things do get messy. Brake? You won't even need to take your finger off the accelerator. This is not to say that *Arctic Thunder* is easy. Collecting the right power-up at the right time is crucial, as is shaving off vital seconds by discovering short cuts, or boosting on to a high

ridge to access the devastating super attack. Furthermore, the AI riders are ruthless and any success is always earned.

There's more depth to *Arctic Thunder* than to most arcade conversions of its ilk. A total of 12 courses display commendable variety while an intelligent game structure and a decent split-screen Multiplayer mode turn a game-to-rent into a game-to-buy. This, then, is another winning package of instant arcade racing thrills from the ever-reliable Midway coin-op stable. ■ **Sam Richards**

ARTIC THUNDER

Why we'd buy it:

- Loads of great multiple-route courses
- Those sleds don't half shift

Why we'd leave it:

- Ropier graphics
- Not quite as satisfying as the arcade game

07

PlayStation 2 VERDICT

MOTO GP 2



Publisher: SCEE Developer: Namco
Price: £39.99 Players: 1-2

The original *Moto GP* impressed with its sharp graphics, attention to detail, and realistic handling. Slick and superbly presented, Namco's evolved *Moto GP 2* adds new bikes, courses and modes and improved visuals. Action is intense, demanding constant concentration. The Simulation mode has a learning curve that you need a rope to climb – the bike squirms under full acceleration, flips out if you over-rev, or slips wildly if you touch the grass. But that's what bikes are all about and, ultimately, this is a fun, challenging motorbike sim. ■ **DE**

MOTO GP 2

Why we'd buy it:

- A refreshing racer
- Excellent 3D graphics
- Lovely race replay facility

Why we'd leave it:

- Shallow multiplayer option
- Stupidly tough Simulation mode

07

PlayStation 2 VERDICT

SMUGGLERS RUN 2: HOSTILE TERRITORIES



Publisher: Rockstar Games Developer: Angel Studios
Price: £39.99 Players: 1-2

Smuggler's *Run 2: Hostile Territories* takes the free-roaming, go-where-thou-wilt philosophy of its predecessor and maxes it out with explosions, helicopters, tanks and all the other violent accoutrements of armed conflict. The premise of SR2 is that you're an agent of an international smuggling cartel. You visit remote conflict-ridden areas, drive a succession of vehicles over harsh environments, pick up contraband, blow up baddies and get paid for it. Missions become a little safer after a while but this is great vehicle combat fun. ■ **SF**

SMUGGLER'S RUN 2: HOSTILE TERRITORIES

Why we'd buy it:

- Fun-packed action
- Car-driving frenzy
- Down 'n' dirty atmosphere

Why we'd leave it:

- Seen it all before
- Repetitive enemy AI
- We're playing GTAII

07

PlayStation 2 VERDICT

GLOBAL TOURING CHALLENGE: AFRICA



Publisher: Rage Developer: Rage
Price: £39.99 Players: 1-2

Offering a 19-circuit trip, taking in Zambia, Egypt, South Africa and Morocco, *GTC* makes good use of varied offroad locations to provide an alternative to the usual urban driver. Sadly, gameplay is very familiar. Although the sublime handling allows you to throw the cars around, the game lacks the endurance feel of a real touring event – it's about speed rather than survival. This is further emphasised by the short courses and a lack of car damage. However, it's hard to dislike a game that provides exciting racing around such diverse circuits as these. ■ **SM**

GLOBAL TOURING CHALLENGE: AFRICA

Why we'd buy it:

- A fast, undemanding racer
- Fun two-player
- Cars handle well

Why we'd leave it:

- Not exactly original
- No car damage
- Courses are too short

07

PlayStation 2 VERDICT

RIDGE RACER V



Publisher: SCEE Developer: Namco
Price: £19.99 Players: 1-2

Ridge *Racer V* is fast. It also looks great (most of the time) and it handles in an incredibly exciting fashion. In many departments it's exactly what you want from a *Ridge Racer* game. But this is a flawed diamond and the key problem is the lack of innovation – stealing great chunks from its predecessors and offering nothing new. And then there are the inch-wide borders and jagged lines afflicting every scenic line. Plus, the shoddy two-player mode shrouds everything in fog. All of which leaves a fun arcade racer that falls short of high expectations. ■ **DG**

RIDGE RACER V

Why we'd buy it:

- Sense of genuine speed
- Superb handling
- Easy to pick up and play

Why we'd leave it:

- Bad PAL conversion
- Fogging in two-player
- Jagged visuals

07

PlayStation 2 VERDICT



RACING ROUND-UP

Still haven't found the perfect racer for you? Fear not, the PS2 boasts a veritable car showroom of offroaders, comedy karters, superbikers and 18 wheelers for your driving pleasure. Check out these also-rans on the grand racing game circuit.



F1 2001

■ EA Sports ■ £19.99 ■ 1-2 players
All the slick presentation and detail you'd expect from a licensed EA title plus a good balance between accessibility and in-depth simulation.
Score: 07



MOTO GP

■ SCE ■ £19.99 ■ 1-2 players
Visually impressive motorbike sim from Namco. Lot's of realistic bikes, courses, etc, but gameplay lacks the sparkle of top ranking racers like Gran Turismo.
Score: 07



SMUGGLER'S RUN

■ Rockstar ■ £39.99 ■ 1-2 players
Mission-based hillbilly driving game, part Driver, part Dukes of Hazzard. Visuals and locations are great but the tasks are repetitive.
Score: 07



G-SURFERS

■ Midas ■ £39.99 ■ 1-2 players
WipeOut-style futuristic racer with the added bonus of a superb track editor. The graphics are rough though, and it can chug a bit at times.
Score: 07



RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP

■ SCI ■ £39.99 ■ 1-4 players
Boasts 29 licensed cars and 24 circuits, but the handling is a little too slippery and it lacks the long term challenge of Colin McRae Rally 3.
Score: 06



ATV OFFROAD

■ SCE ■ £39.99 ■ 1-4 players
Enjoyably jumpy quad bike racer in which contact with the ground is a fleeting pleasure. Muddy visuals and over-aggressive AI spoil the fun.
Score: 06



CART FURY CHAMPIONSHIP RACING

■ Midway ■ £39.99 ■ 1-2 players
Typically fast and frenzied Midway racer but it's less polished than a kebab shop counter.
Score: 06



CIRCUS MAXIMUS: CHARIOT WARS

■ THQ ■ £39.99 ■ 1-4 players
PS2's first (possibly last) chariot racing lark is fun at first but the repetitive combat and lack of polish soon annoy.
Score: 06



DOWNFORCE

■ Virgin ■ £39.99 ■ 1-2 players
Passable attempt to combine the urban setting and arcade immediacy of Burnout with a Formula One sim. Not quite sure why they bothered though.
Score: 06



WILD WILD RACING

■ Rage ■ £39.99 ■ 1-2 players
Demanding offroad buggy racer with huge, undulating courses and an interesting challenge mode. Let down by poor visuals and tricky handling.
Score: 06



18 WHEELER

■ Acclaim ■ £39.99 ■ 1-2 players
The arcade version of this game has a big truck-style steering wheel and a rope you could pull to sound the horn. The PS2 version doesn't. Nuff said.
Score: 06



THE SIMPSONS ROAD RAGE

■ EA ■ £39.99 ■ 1-2 players
It's Crazy Taxi but with the cast of The Simpsons and set in Springfield. What an inspired use of a license. Well done!
Score: 06



WACKY RACES STARRING DASTARDLY AND MUTTLEY

■ Infogrames ■ £39.99 ■ 1-4 players
Captures the look and feel of the cartoon well but lacks balance and the track design is confusing.
Score: 06



TEST DRIVE: OFFROAD WIDE OPEN

■ Infogrames ■ £39.99 ■ 1-2 players
Passable freeroamer, with nice views. Offroad Wide Open would have been a good name for a safari-based porn film.
Score: 06



TD OVERDRIVE

■ Infogrames ■ £39.99 ■ 1-2 players
Illegal racing lunacy with American muscle cars. Good fun, but the handling is twitchier than a Vietnam veteran during a fireworks display.
Score: 06



F1 CHAMPIONSHIP SEASON 2000

■ EA ■ £39.99 ■ 1-4 players
Perfectly reasonable F1 sim with all the teams, courses and the like. Merely lacks any new ideas whatsoever.
Score: 05



STAR WARS: SUPER BOMBAD RACING

■ Activision ■ £39.99 ■ 1-4 players
Diddy Star Wars characters with oversized heads race diddy hovercars. Not quite as bad as it sounds.
Score: 05



F1 RACING CHAMPIONSHIP

■ Video System ■ £39.99 ■ 1-2 players
Another F1 sim, this one suffering from inconsistent frame rate and an unresponsive throttle. But we all get that from time to time.
Score: 05



PENNY RACERS

■ Midas ■ £39.99 ■ 1-4 players
Hey, it's *Gran Turismo*, right, but with toy cars instead of big, hot throbbing motors! Why did anyone think this would be a good idea? Why? WHY?!
Score: 04



SUPERCAR STREET CHALLENGE

■ Activision ■ £39.99 ■ 1-2 players
Totally soulless 'me too!' urban racer. So few ideas it may as well be in a persistent vegetative state.
Score: 04



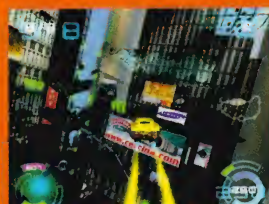
PRO RALLY 2002

■ Ubi Soft ■ £19.99 ■ 1-2 players
Very basic rally sim. The graphics are okay and the framerate solid, but there's none of the handling depth of Colin McRae, V-Rally or WRC.
Score: 05



SPACE RACE

■ Infogrames ■ £39.99 ■ 1-4 players
Cartoon racer filled with characters, sound effects and weapons from the Looney Tunes world. A bit more fun than an arvil falling on your head.
Score: 05



NYR: NEW YORK RACE

■ Wanadoo ■ £39.99 ■ 1-8 players
Mystifyingly pointless futuristic racer based on a scene from whiffy sci-fi turd *The Fifth Element*. Are we really so desperate for licenses?
Score: 05



MIDNIGHT CLUB

■ Rockstar ■ £39.99 ■ 1-2 players
Set in and around the New York and London illegal racing scenes. Found guilty of featherweight handling and lack of longevity.
Score: 04



SUPER TRUCKS

■ Jester ■ £39.99 ■ 1-2 players
Truck racing game which fails to capture any of the essence of truck racing 'excitement' with its sluggish handling and unambitious design.
Score: 04



PARIS-DAKAR RALLY

■ Acclaim ■ £39.99 ■ 1 player
Slightly over-ambitious attempt to bring the real-life (11,000km long) rally to PS2. Vehicle instability and dull visuals spoil the drive.
Score: 05



4X4 EVOLUTION

■ Take 2 ■ £39.99 ■ 1-2 players
Undecided between the stake and kidney of sim realism and the chicken and mushroom of arcade playability, this game pokes a flabby finger in both pies.
Score: 05



TOKYO XTREME RACER

■ Crave ■ £39.99 ■ 1-2 players
Hit the streets of Tokyo in a souped-up production car. Like going to a boy racer 'cruise' in an Essex carpark. No ugly tarts getting their baps out, mind.
Score: 04



ANTZ EXTREME RACING

■ Empire ■ £34.99 ■ 1-2 players
Oh lord, another licensed *Mario Kart* clone, this one crawling from the pit of hell FOUR YEARS after the film. And it's got pointless running bits in it.
Score: 04



STUNT GP

■ Virgin ■ £39.99 ■ 1-2 players
Really bad stunt racer with handling physics seemingly coded by listless fourteen year old boys hurrying through their homework.
Score: 03



MOTOR MAYHEM

■ Infogrames ■ £39.99 ■ 1-2 players
Average combat drive-'em-up with glitchy visuals and the lifespan of a may fly. That's quite short, by the way (barely a day in the adult stage).
Score: 05



LEGO RACERS 2

■ Lego ■ £39.99 ■ 1-2 players
Race in cars made out of small plastic bricks. Basic visuals and limited gameplay make this one for the kids. And undemanding kids at that.
Score: 05



DRIVING EMOTION TYPE-S

■ EA ■ £39.99 ■ 1-2 players
Much-hyped racer from Square. Failed to live up to said hype in quite a spectacular manner with its horrible handling and lack of circuits.
Score: 04



RC REVENGE PRO

■ Acclaim ■ £39.99 ■ 1-2 players
Diabolical remote control racer with terrible visuals and gameplay so unbalanced you'd probably find bodies buried beneath its patio.
Score: 03



THE FLINTSTONES IN VIVA ROCK VEGAS

■ Swing! ■ £39.99 ■ 1-4 players
Fittingly awful *Mario Kart* vomit, based on the cinematic slurry that is *Viva Rock Vegas*. Avoid both film and game.
Score: 02



TG DARE DEVIL

■ Kemco ■ £39.99 ■ 1-2 players
Drive around four cities collecting coins in this average coin-collecting city-based driving game in which you collect coins and drive around cities.
Score: 05



LOTUS CHALLENGE

■ Virgin ■ £39.99 ■ 1-2 players
Limp-wristed Lotus street racer. The handling is as flat as Calista Flockhart's chest and the cars are slower than a council estate maths class.
Score: 05



DRIVEN

■ Bam ■ £39.99 ■ 1-2 players
Shoddy racer based on an even more shoddy Stallone film. Less fun than watching *Stop! Or My Mom Will Shoot* on a 24-hour loop. Probably.
Score: 04



LONDON RACER II

■ Davilex ■ £19.99 ■ 1-2 players
Budget street racer made totally and utterly pointless by the existence of the PS2 platinum range. Hmm, *Gran Turismo 3: A-spec* or this?..
Score: 03

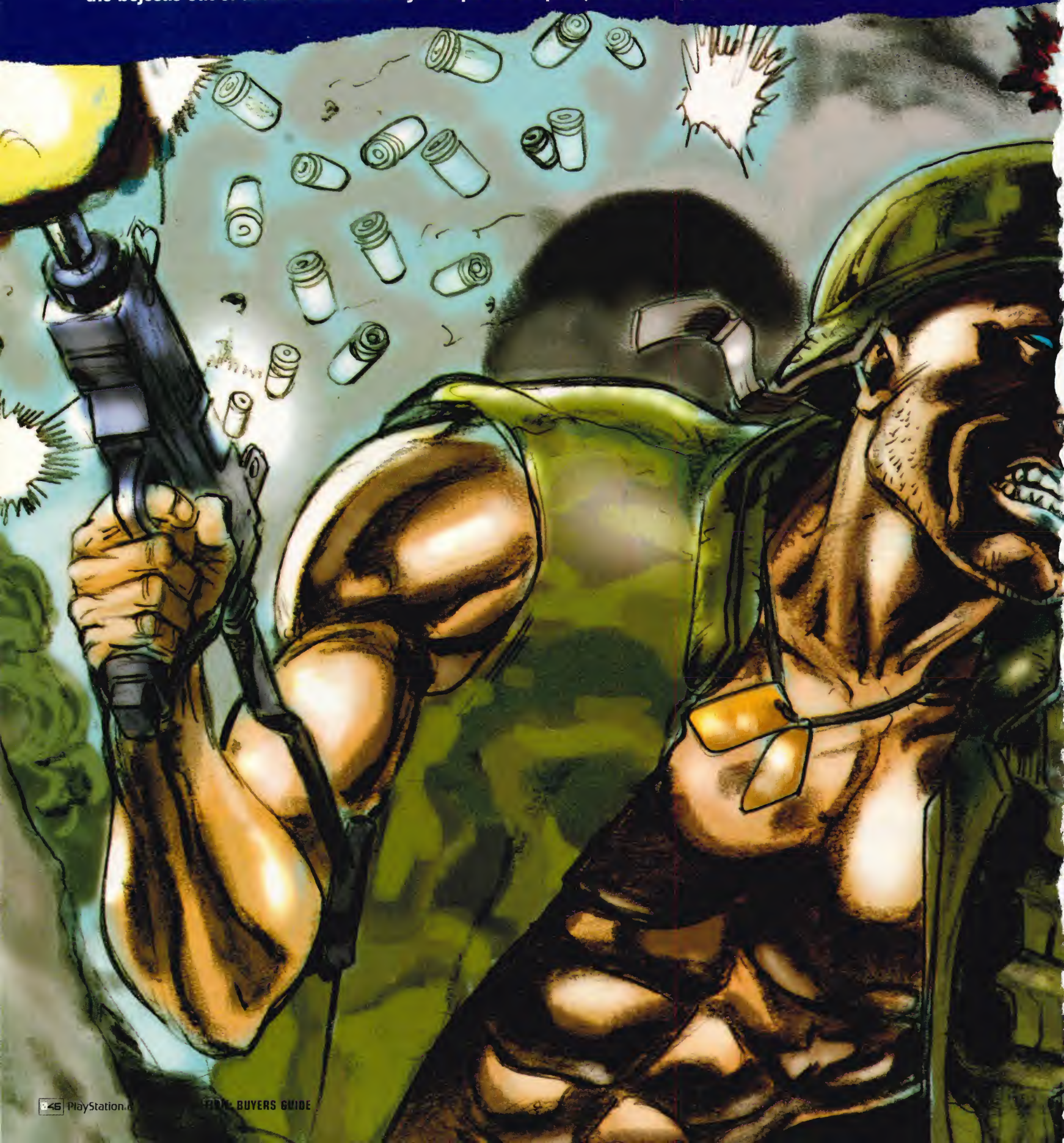


JET ION GP

■ Ubi Soft ■ £14.99 ■ 1-2 players
Criminally awful *WipeOut* clone, perhaps knocked up in an afternoon by a shadowy secret society of the world's worst programmers.
Score: 01

SHOOT-'EM-UPS

Put aside your liberal objections to war, it's time to grab an Uzi, stuff your pants with grenades and blast the bejesus out of aliens/Nazis/monkeys/Iraqis/the Empire (delete as applicable).





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SHOOT-'EM-UPS ROUND-UP



TIMESPLITTERS 2

It's *Quantum Leap* directed by Sam Peckinpah and the most essential purchase since *Metal Gear Solid 2*.

Publisher: Eidos Developer: Radical Design
Price: £44.99 Players: 1-16

A long with *SSX*, the original *TimeSplitters* remains one of the few PlayStation 2 launch titles capable of withstanding scrutiny today. But let's be honest, it was no *GoldenEye* and to be fair, it was never meant to be. Given the condensed development cycle, compromises had to be made and the solo missions just weren't up to the standard set by the Multiplayer experience. By contrast, *TimeSplitters 2* feels like the game that Free Radical Design always wanted to make.

Looking at the game on purely technical terms, it's a masterclass in how to make the PlayStation 2 chipset really sing. From the cavernous halls and Gothic spires of Notre Dame to the arid landscape of Planet X, where UFOs buzz overhead, it's breathtaking third-generation stuff and an interstellar mile away from the drab corridors usually found in first-person shooters. The spot effects are equally impressive: a fully charged laser gun makes the air surrounding it shimmer, while the polished floors in Big Tony's Chicago nightclub create pixel-perfect reflections.

TS2 is overflowing with ideas and influences, yet it's remarkable how succinctly the whole thing plays. This is a joyous B-movie pastiche, taking in hammer horror, spaghetti westerns and cult sci-fi. But whether you're playing as a spaceman or a moustachioed super spy, the hand-drawn animation and cartoon characters ensure the game retains its uniquely stylised look. Binding the whole

package together is Graeme Norgate's incredible score, which mixes Gregorian chants, sleazy jazz and Morricone twangs to characterise each different era.

TIME TO DIE

All of which would count for nothing without the enhanced Story mode. By now you've probably already had a bash at the Siberia level featured on this month's cover DVD, so you should know what to expect: big levels, multiple objectives and gameplay that mixes stealth with run-and-gun action. Where previously it was just a case of blasting your way in, collecting the time crystal and escaping, now the levels are packed with variety. At the stealthier end of the spectrum is the NeoTokyo mission, where you have to trail a hacker to her underground base without being detected. The temporal uplink gizmo acts like a makeshift radar, enabling you to dodge security cameras and hovering police cars.

In contrast, the Robot Factory is a lot more trigger happy, with wave after wave of mechanised enemies to dismantle. You'll also find yourself trying to disarm bombs in a super villain's underground base (complete with guards in yellow jumpsuits) and breaking prisoners out of jail in the Wild West (see *Chained Heat*). Not only are the mission objectives much more diverse this time, but they also change on the fly. Rival gangsters will suddenly start

shooting up O'Leary's bar in Chicago, while on Planet X you get caught in the crossfire of an alien civil war.

On the easiest setting you'll probably be able to play through all ten levels (including the finale on the 'Splitters' space station) in a few days. But ramp up the difficulty and it's an altogether different proposition. Along with additional objectives and completely new areas to explore, the enemies also become crack shots. It takes lightning reflexes to outgun them without taking a hit, which is vital as extra ammo and health pick-ups are scarce. So much so, that it occasionally feels strangely like a survival horror game, in that you have to make every single shot count.



//You can design your own missions, with multiple objectives and patrolling enemies//

Each mission features an appropriately themed arsenal, so in the Wild West you're restricted to a Garrett pistol and scope-equipped Winchester rifle, which necessitates a completely different approach to the rapid-fire blasters found in the Robot Factory. As a piece of game design *TimeSplitters 2* is remarkably old-skool. With each successive attempt you make a little more progress, gradually learning where different enemies appear and building a strategy to suit. With practice you reach the



Hmm, we're going to need a better weapon. Or, alternatively, RUN AWAY!

TRIGGER HAPPY

Any first-person shooter is arguably only as good as its weapon set, and TS2 doesn't disappoint with a well-balanced range of widow-makers. Check out five of our favourites.



Tommy Gun

Make like Albert Finney in *Miller's Crossing* and fill those bums full of lead. The Dual Shock 2's rat-a-tat rumble is even more satisfying with a Tommy Gun in each hand.



Electrotool

This tasty little number looks like a glorified Black & Decker sander but spews crackling, high-voltage death. Also makes short work of assembling flat-packed shelving.



Plasma Autorifle

Splits out a hail of pastel-hued plasma bullets in primary fire mode and can also shoot 'sticky' grenades. Prone to overheating, though.



Flame-Thrower

Geneva Convention? Free Radical must have burned its copy, because this toasty masterpiece will immolate the opposition in seconds.



Brick

Relive the glory days of Seventies football violence by running around throwing bricks at your friends.



Four player blast-offs offer endless fun.



It's the killer robot factory, and you're standing on the production line of death.

point where your path through the level is choreographed down to the last split-second. Instead of blasting away in a blind panic you're deadheading zombies with a single shot. Suddenly the once-impossible objective is within your grasp, and the sense of achievement is immense.

Head over to the Arcade section and you discover one of the most immense Multiplayer modes ever devised.

TimeSplitters 2 features a total of 16 different maps, including revamped versions of a few old favourites, but it's the sheer variety of match types that will leave you slack-jawed with amazement. Using iLink, you can even hook up to six PlayStation 2s together for 16-player carnage.

TimeSplitters 2 is as frenetic as fragging gets. There isn't much point trying to use *Counter-Strike* tactics against a monkey with a flame-thrower. In fact, you often won't last more than a few seconds before slumping to the ground in a char-grilled heap. This time there's also a mammoth League option, which is split into three difficulty levels, each featuring five tournaments containing three matches. It's a fantastically ludicrous amount of gameplay.

Needless to say you can customise every single option, from match durations to one-hit kills. Once completely unlocked, the game features a chocolate box of over 100 characters.

It's unlikely you'll ever tire of the Multiplayer mode, but just in case, there are seven Challenge games to master. Each one contains three different tasks, usually played against the clock. One Challenge involves blasting giggling apes out of the air, clay pigeon-style. One has you shooting exploding watermelons out of their paws, while the other places you on the Siberian dam as exploding monkeys hurtle across the water like hairy bouncing bombs.

The recent inclusion of a reworked Mapmaker mode ensures *TimeSplitters 2* reaches classic status. As in the first game, plonk down a few rooms and you can create a rudimentary Deathmatch level in just minutes. However, it is the ability to design your own single-player missions, with multiple objectives and patrolling enemies, which puts *TimeSplitters 2* in an altogether different league. Best of all, you can save the finished version to Memory Card and swap homebrew missions with your mates.

Best shooter on PlayStation 2? Absolutely. Some may prefer *Medal Of Honor*'s gritty authenticity to this candy-coloured feast, but the almost inexhaustible entertainment provided by the Multiplayer and Mapmaker modes means *TimeSplitters 2* is an irresistible package. ■ **Tim Clark**

TIMESPLITTERS 2

Why we'd buy it:
- Stunning single-player and Mapmaker modes
- Entertaining Multiplayer

Why we'd leave it:
- No online option
- We suffer from chronic motion sickness

10

PlayStation 2 **VERDICT**



TIMESPLITTERS

Publisher: **Eidos** Developer: **Free Radical Design**
Price: **£19.99** Players: **1-4**

A The 'TimeSplitters' in question are an evil race of temporal scavengers who maraud throughout Earth's history, spreading chaos and destruction. In their path is a disparate characters who must defeat them across various time zones to prevent the enslaving of mankind. True, there's no great depth to the story but Free Radical hasn't set out to make a movie. Instead, this is a frenetic, pumped-up 3D blaster with addictive gameplay, great graphics and an arsenal of awesome weaponry. True, the sequel is a giant leap forward (see left) but at the new Platinum price, this is still worth a look. ■ **JS**

TIMESPLITTERS

Why we'd buy it:
- Blindingly fast
- Moxy weapons and weird characters

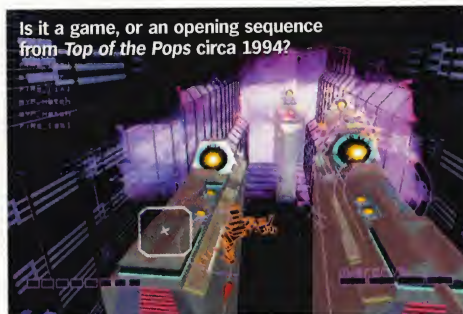
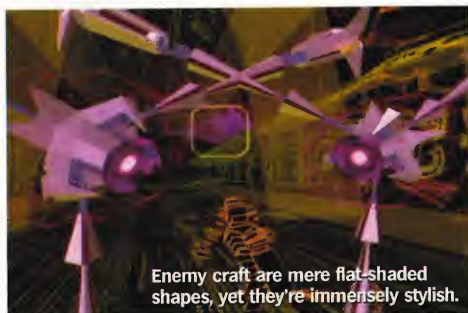
Why we'd leave it:
- Slow loading times
- Shallow single-player
- No blood and gore

09

PlayStation 2 **VERDICT**

REZ

Sega confirms its reputation as the most original and daring game developer in the world with this stunning mix of old skool shooter and surreal musical light show.



Publisher: SCEI Developer: Sega (United Game Artists)
Price: £39.99 Players: 1

Easily one of the most original PlayStation 2 titles out there, *Rez* is a triple distilled shot of pure gameplay. On the surface, it looks like a straightforward on-rails space blaster. Represented by an evolving avatar (from a single cell through humanoid to pure energy) you are inside a super-computer called Eden and your mission is to break through the mainframe's five firewalls, each of which are protected by drones and boss defences. So far, so *Tron*. Playing the game simply involves moving a targeting square over enemies, their structures and projectile weapons as they hurtle towards you.

However, what sounds basic on the page is transformed in (virtual) reality. Designed by Sega genius Tetsuya

Mizuguchi (who has been painstakingly refining gameplay for a decade with the likes of *Sega Rally* and *Space Channel Five*) the game is an exploration of synesthesia – a condition in which the brain confuses sensory inputs so that sounds are seen, tastes are heard, etc. It's a concept explored by artist Wassily Kandinsky from whom Mizuguchi took inspiration. Let's face it, how many other game designers can claim to take inspiration from ANYTHING apart from *Blade Runner*? For this alone, *Rez* deserves your attention.

But the important thing is how this inspiration is applied and *Rez* realises its influences beautifully. Each level is accompanied by pulsing trance music and by locking onto and detonating targets, you trigger sounds that not only fuse and weave into the music, but also mutate the graphics around you. Each type of enemy object sets off a different sonic and visual effect, so before long your sensory circuits are overloading.

More than any other game *Rez* cannot be known through screenshots alone. It really has to be experienced first hand to appreciate its intoxicating, edgy brilliance. It's almost a shame to have to judge it on the same grounds as regular games, so different is it from just about anything else out there. Indeed, take the criteria of long-term replay value out of the equation and *Rez* is a nigh on perfect title. Pure genius. ■ Paul Fitzpatrick

REZ

Why we'd buy it:
- Innovative and inspiring concept
- Gorgeous abstract visuals

Why we'd leave it:
- Because we only buy games that fall into safe, predictable genres

09

PlayStation 2 VERDICT

HALF-LIFE

The simple tale of one man's fight against an army of transdimensional monsters..



Publisher: Vivendi Universal Developer: Valve/Gearbox
Price: £39.99 Players: 1-2

So much has been written about Valve's ground-breaking FPS that most people feel they've completed it already – although, until you've actually been trapped in a nuclear silo with a gigantic alien tentacle beast, or caught in the crossfire between acid-spitting space dogs and machine gun-toting marines, you won't really appreciate how endlessly gripping this epic game is.

As scientist Gordon Freeman, you turn up



for work at the Black Mesa Research Institute one day to find that an experiment has gone horribly wrong and created a dimensional rift between Earth and a distant alien planet. Suddenly, Gordon is fighting for his life against hordes of otherworldly monsters. Beginning in the sterile Black Mesa lab, you battle through sub-chambers, mines, surface bases and mountain ranges as one continuous single-player experience. Around every corner a shock awaits. It might be screaming scientists, it might be the mysterious man in the black suit, or – more often than not – it might be three alien snot beasts firing green gunk at you. The weapons at your disposal are a satisfyingly effective bunch. Stock items like the sniper rifle and shotgun are given a fresh lease of

life with new features while the totally new alien weapons are equally sick and effective.

Half-Life is something approaching the perfect adventure game. A simple yet compelling story, moments of grim humour, loads of unforgettable set pieces, astonishing attention to detail and a scientist in big specs for a hero.

■ Keith Stuart

HALF-LIFE

Why we'd buy it:
- Relentless mix of action and tension
- Great story, well told

Why we'd leave it:
- It's been around a while and looks dated at times
- We're scared of monsters

09

PlayStation 2 VERDICT

MEDAL OF HONOR: FRONTLINE

Fight them on the beaches, the landing grounds, the fields and the streets. And never surrender!



It's like *Saving Private Ryan* in videogame form. But without that old bloke crying.

2 | 44

Publisher: EA Developer: EA LA Price: £44.99 Players: 1

There's simply nothing in videogame as satisfying as shooting down legions of authentic Nazi soldiers. Many have come to love such satisfaction in EA's brilliant *Medal Of Honor* and *Medal Of Honor: Underground* on PSone. And now, like a flaming zeppelin on a crash course to oblivion, *Medal Of Honor: Frontline* is exploding onto your PS2.

You step into the breach as Lieutenant Jimmy Patterson in a barn-storming, five-mission coup de grace. Action is broken down into 18 huge levels which mostly involve traipsing around on foot and picking off Nazis – although occasionally you'll jump into a vehicle and will be forced to mow down wave upon wave of foot soldiers. You aren't quite the Rambo-esque one-man army you were in previous *MOH* games. On several missions you must rely on comrades for covering fire and you can return the favour when they are performing an objective-completing task.

Frontline is a rigidly linear experience, a discovery that frustrates at first. Sure, there are plenty of junctures when your path splits in two, but often the route that doesn't take you down the track necessary to complete the mission simply sends you to a stack of ammo and a dead end. It would have also been nice to have allowed access to any building to obtain a better vantage point for picking off enemies with the sniper rifle, but most doors are locked.

On the other hand, such linear thinking does tend to magnify the intensity of the experience. *Frontline* prioritises a blood-

Nazis duck, dive and weave out of your way. Apart from this one.



Hmm, pistol vs tank. And the winner is...



pulsing shootout over potentially distracting adventuring elements. And pretty much any shortcoming can be forgiven when the gameplay is so thrilling and addictive.

The drama you live out here ensures you'll not sleep until allied victory is assured. Series veterans and newcomers alike will find a hugely polished game that is as much a history lesson as it is a mindless shooter – remember, these events actually happened. Thanks to the power of PS2, the young (and even the not so young) now have access to a virtual experience from which they can gain emotive insight into what veterans experienced in WWII.

Purchase this game and you will happily blow a few extra quid on popples come Remembrance Day. ■ Ryan Butt

MEDAL OF HONOR: FRONTLINE

Why we'd buy it:
- Experience war at its rawest
- 18 challenging levels

Why we'd leave it:
- A little too linear
- No two-player levels (for the first time!)

09

PlayStation 2 VERDICT



You can either shoot the poorly-trained, retreating conscripts, or select the less messy 'Trade Sanctions' mode, killing millions in one swoop!

Night missions require those trusty night vision goggles.



The armoury naturally features a rocket launcher, among many other weapons.



CONFLICT: DESERT STORM

Not just a third-person shooter, *Desert Storm* is a third-person shooter times four. Storm the Gulf!

Publisher: SCI Developer: Pivotal Price: £39.99 Players: 1-2

Conflict: Desert Storm blends third-person, squad-based action with the hush-hush heroics of an Andy McNab novel. Set during the 1990 Gulf War, the game gives you command of a four-man team of SAS or Delta Force soldiers. With the bare minimum of training, you face 15 increasingly difficult covert missions. Dropped behind enemy lines, you'll be outnumbered and outgunned. The aim is simple: get into the target areas cause maximum damage with minimum casualties and get out. It's not a case of 'who dares wins', but rather 'who dares might win (with a little practice)'.

What makes *Conflict: Desert Storm* interesting is its team play aspect. Instead of controlling a one-man army, the game offers an involving single-player 'multiplayer' experience. With the tap of a button, you can switch quickly between the four members of your Special Forces team, directly controlling the selected soldier in third- and first-person views. You can play the whole game this way, jumping between

the squad commander, sniper, heavy weapons specialist and explosives expert to move and fire as required. But, crucially, each soldier can also issue orders to the others. Advanced AI ensures that your men defend themselves automatically, change weapons to suit the situation and heal themselves if required. At times, it's like playing with three other people.

From the opening mission in the desert canyons, it's into the streets of Kuwait City, on into Iraq and ultimately into Baghdad itself. Many of the missions are set during the day, but a few take place after sundown. Some even kick off in bright daylight which slowly fades to darkness as you play. And to its credit, *Conflict: Desert Storm* mixes up its military manoeuvres. The urban levels contrast with those set in the open desert – requiring substantially different tactics.

Conflict: Desert Storm is blessed with levels of detail that inject a real shot of realism. With a multiplayer option that enables you to fight all 15 missions co-operatively with a friend, it's hugely enjoyable and replayable. ■ Dean Evans

CONFLICT: DESERT STORM

Why we'd buy it:
- Utterly engrossing team-based warfare
- Huge levels

Why we'd leave it:
- Early missions might be a little too easy although later ones make up for it

08

PlayStation 2 VERDICT





ZONE OF THE ENDERS

Robot Wars goes interstellar courtesy of the man behind *Metal Gear*.

Publisher: Konami Developer: KCEJ Price: £19.99 Players: 1-2

The brainchild of *Metal Gear Solid* creator Hideo Kojima, *Zone Of The Enders* swaps the world of terrorism and subterfuge for some spectacular interstellar robot wars. Set in 22nd century space, young Leo becomes the accidental hero of the game after his home is besieged by a mechanoid army. In the ensuing battle, he takes refuge in the vast, robotic frame that is the Jehuty. Detecting human presence, the mech's AI program activates and so begins one boy's epic journey of self-discovery and frenzied mechanical slaughter.

Handling a bloody great robot armed to the hilt with futuristic weaponry could be misconstrued as being somewhat cumbersome. Not so. Jehuty is totally responsive, aided by instinctive controls and a superb lock-on system that remains on its target until you either disengage, blow the victim to a bazillion pieces or, worse case scenario, meet a similarly spectacular fate yourself. *ZOE* also has looks to die for. The cityscapes that provide a backdrop to the action

feature tiny civilian buildings with cars in the driveway and working factories. You can even blast enemy mechs into these structures, sending debris cascading to the floor.

Apart from being marginally short (just over eight hours of gameplay in Easy mode) *ZOE* is a fantastic shoot-'em-up. It's as intelligent as it is playable, missions are well conceived, weapons are varied and enemies are ferocious, speedy creations that show real ingenuity, resulting in some thrilling tactical encounters. **Ben Lawrence**

ZONE OF THE ENDERS

Why we'd buy it:
- Great gameplay
- Looks stunning
- Big robots

Why we'd leave it:
- Might be a little too short for hardcore gamers

09

PlayStation 2 VERDICT

QUAKE III REVOLUTION



Publisher: EA Developer: Bullfrog
Price: £39.99 Players: 1-4

Bullfrog has done its best to make Id's seminal first-person shooter console-friendly: inventing a new Campaign mode to add structure to the single-player experience, and providing surprisingly effective Dual Shock controls. Four-player action is smooth and fast, and the game boasts 36 environments, some new, some from the original *QIII*, and others from later add-ons. The brand may well be imposing to FPS newbies and veterans are no doubt cynical of the 'Revolution' tag, but for sheer balls-out multiplayer blasting, this is still hard to beat. **KS**

QUAKE III REVOLUTION

Why we'd buy it:
- Fast and furious
- Advanced lighting and particle effects

Why we'd leave it:
- No online facility
- Not as immersive as *TimeSplitters*

09

PlayStation 2 VERDICT

UNREAL TOURNAMENT



Publisher: Infogrames Developer: Epic
Price: £39.99 Players: 1-4

The great news is that *Unreal Tournament* on PS2 is damn good, with over 50 beautifully designed arenas, 21 characters, very competent computer-controlled opponents, six very different game options and 12 weapons of destruction. Plus, in a welcome new feature, hard-fought battles are rewarded with unlocked characters, maps, cheats and different game 'ladders' that include deathmatch tournaments, Capture The Flag competitions plus other juicy challenges. Multiplayer games are jolly too, but the poor frame rate does tarnish things a tad. **JS**

UNREAL TOURNAMENT

Why we'd buy it:
- Many well-designed levels
- Superb deathmatch modes

Why we'd leave it:
- Jerky frame rate in multiplayer encounters
- *TimeSplitters 2* is superior

08

PlayStation 2 VERDICT



TIME CRISIS 2

Live out those submerged vigilante fantasies with fake plastic guns!

Publisher: SCEE Developer: Namco Price: £39.99 Players: 1-2

This smokin' package contains the coin-op original in its entirety and a compelling collection of sub-games good enough to have been flogged as stand alone titles. Oh, and then there's the light gun. Designed to eradicate the need for a foot pedal, the sleek G-Con 2 comes with a D-pad on the hammer plate and a button under the handle, so you can take cover and reload using a single hand. This allows you to plug in a second gun for some John Woo-esque blasting action.

One or two cops can play simultaneously. The second character is ever present in the one-player mode but serves no purpose other than to obstruct your aim at vital moments. Get a partner involved for the two-player co-op mode, though, and the game comes into its own. Each player has their own route through the levels which throws up unique vantage points to pick off enemy snipers. Unfortunately, the split-screen severely restricts your vision - with some of the distant gunmen being quite hard to distinguish. There's

nothing Namco could have done about that but it does reward the rich by including a link-up mode that enables the use of two TVs and two PS2s. It's a pity only a minority of gamers will be able to take advantage of this feature.

Time Crisis 2 offers endless channels for unleashing daily frustration. Bank manager refused you credit? Imagine he's the Neodyne boss and hunt him down to extinction! Pigeon shot on your car? Make it pay the ultimate price in Skeet Shoot! Once you pop you just can't stop. **Ryan Butt**

TIME CRISIS 2

Why we'd buy it:
- Compulsive thrills
- We're not allowed guns in real life

Why we'd leave it:
- You need a big TV
- Not exactly a deep experience

08

PlayStation 2 VERDICT

RED FACTION



Publisher: THQ Developer: Volition
Price: £19.99 Players: 1-2

Taking ideas from *Half-Life* (as well as *Total Recall*), *Red Faction* jets off to Mars for a tale of ruthless exploitation and big explosions. As rebel footsoldier Parker, you must shoot, hide and jump your way through a series of futuristic industrial locations while the deadly Ultor guards close in. The cut-scenes are rather scrappy and there's a disappointing reliance on platform jumping. Plus, the multiplayer option only supports two players. However, the Geo-Mod aspect (blow holes in walls) is fun and the single-player adventure is big and entertaining. ■ KS

RED FACTION

Why we'd buy it:

- Considerable one-player challenge
- Blowing up walls

Why we'd leave it:

- The visuals are a bit scrappy in places
- The odd gameplay flaw

08

PlayStation 2 VERDICT

This henchman's impression of a dying swan fails to elicit any mercy from 007.



It's the nail-biting 'Drive To The Shops' sub-challenge.



JAMES BOND 007 IN... AGENT UNDER FIRE

007 gets the EA treatment. Yes, he comes out shaken, not stirred.

Publisher: EA Developer: EA Price: £39.99 Players: 1-4

Faced with the task of creating a quality *James Bond* game, EA did the sensible thing: cribbed Rare's N64 title *GoldenEye* and added a few new features – including an entirely original story pitting 007 against power-hungry geneticist Arian Malprave, who's kidnapped eight world leaders and plans to replace them with her own obedient clones. Stuff like the multi-objective missions, the use of gadgets, the sniper rifle, the glimpses of *Bond* humour, the female side-kicks, the rescuing of hostages, downloading data, etc, etc, all appeared in the N64 classic. But what does it matter if the end product is fun to play and looks as good as Ursula Andress in a bikini?

What makes *Agent Under Fire* so good is its varied and exciting structure. One minute you're storming Malprave's base in the Swiss Alps, the next you're trundling through Bucharest in a tank blowing away helicopters. Sensibly, there are moments of stealth between the explosions; faithfully

reproducing the structure of the films. A lot of effort has also gone into the collateral detail in each of the visually impressive environments. And the massive number of gadgets – including jet packs, code breakers and winches – means there's always a Bondesque way to proceed.

The relative ease of finishing the game (although there is plenty of replay value) and the over-complicated controls are disappointing. But this is still a hugely enjoyable way of indulging all those spy fantasies. ■ Keith Stuart

JAMES BOND 007 IN... AGENT UNDER FIRE

Why we'd buy it:

- Varied gameplay and lots of weapons and gadgets
- Looks very nice

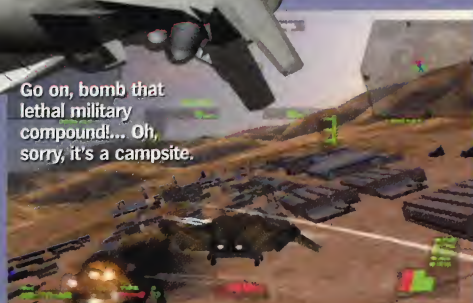
Why we'd leave it:

- We already have *GoldenEye* thank you
- It's very short

08

PlayStation 2 VERDICT

Go on, bomb that lethal military compound.... Oh, sorry, it's a campsite.



Action is admirably varied: you control ground craft as well as the eponymous dropship.



DROPSHIP: UNITED PEACE FORCE

The big badass of future military hardware gets ready for take-off.

Publisher: SCEE Developer: SCEE (Studio Camden) Price: £39.99 Players: 1

The date: 2050. The place: the whole dam planet. In the baffling time scale of future-based games, 2020 saw the creation of the *United Peace Force*, a hulking multinational army formed to replace the UN and NATO. Its job? To suppress dangerous regimes, destroy drug cartels, noble terrorists and generally keep the world singing in perfect harmony. This basically means strong arm campaigns in countries as diverse as Libya and Columbia.

You start the game as a fresh-faced cadet at the dropship flight academy learning how to handle a futuristic military transport plane capable of vertical take-off, supersonic flight and reducing enemies to carbon flakes. The dropships handle very well, not least in the way they always feel like you're piloting a substantial piece of hardware with real inertia. The ability to hover at will does wonders for the gameplay, and not simply because you can deploy ground troops. Sometimes dogfighting just won't work as well as coming to a halt and

making a midair stand, vectoring every which way to lock on to targets above and below.

Enemy AI is well honed, the graphics impressively solid. The huge maps are pop-up free and the only misting visible is of the realistic, atmospheric kind. However, the landscapes can be relatively sparse. It's not ideal, but given the pace of the action and no sign of slowdown in even the hairiest of situations, you have to conclude that the developer got its priorities right. ■ Paul Fitzpatrick

DROPSHIP: UNITED PEACE FORCE

Why we'd buy it:

- We like combat flight sims but crave variety
- Intelligent action

Why we'd leave it:

- We're pacifists, man
- We want instant, pick-up-and-play thrills

08

PlayStation 2 VERDICT

TWISTED METAL: BLACK



Publisher: SCEE Developer: Incognito

Price: £49.99 Players: 1-4

Set in a post-apocalyptic America, *TM:B* has a bunch of demented psychos striving to become the king (or queen) of the roads by obliterating fellow whackos. Each driver has their own unique vehicle, weapons and reason for hating mankind. Plug in a Multitap, invite sadistic mates round and the game comes into its element. Huge arenas house the action as players negotiate rush hour highways and bulldoze buildings to get that kill. The possibilities to inflict carnage are endless making it the ultimate tool to channel pent-up road rage. ■ RB

TWISTED METAL: BLACK

Why we'd buy it:

- We've been stuck in a traffic jam and need to kill

Why we'd leave it:

- It's no fun if you have no friends (but then, what is?)
- Mindless with a capital 'M'

08

PlayStation 2 VERDICT

There are some gorgeous interstellar pyrotechnics as the battles hit full tilt.



You'll be delighted by some of the unlockable craft. It's a Tie-Fighter!



STAR WARS: JEDI STARFIGHTER

Is the latest *Starfighter* an *Empire Strikes Back* or a bit *Episode I*?

Publisher: **Activision** Developer: **LucasArts** Price: **£39.99** Players: **1-2**

Designed to tie-in with *Episode II*, *Jedi Starfighter* rejoins the hero of the original game, Nym on a quest to stop the Trade Federation's aggressive build up near the planet Lok. The Jedi council sends a Jedi Knight to investigate and attempt to form an alliance with the notoriously untrusting Nym. Her name, Adi Gallia. Her craft, the brand new Jedi Starfighter...

In a number of respects, JS is a clone of its predecessor. The basic controls are the same and the meat of the game is taken up by a core of story-led missions (15 this time) with multiple objectives, interspersed by cut-scenes. As before, there are training missions to ease you in, and once again completing story missions unlocks both single and two-player bonus missions along with additional craft and extra goodies.

As for new stuff, there are fresh secondary weapons and a better targeting system. But they're nothing compared to the Jedi Starfighter's secondary functions, the Force Powers. These enhance your defense and attack capabilities with Jedi

mind powers, but require much skill and patience. You can also play any unlocked levels as co-operative split-screen missions, which adds much to the longevity.

Jedi Starfighter is a superb addition to the *Star Wars* universe and easily meets the expectations of quality and flowing gameplay set up by its predecessor. However, despite the innovations put in place, it's hard not to end up wishing the developers had pushed the franchise further and maybe taken a few more risks. **■ Paul Fitzpatrick**

STAR WARS: JEDI STARFIGHTER

Why we'd buy it:

- There's no better 3D space blaster
- Excellent co-op play

Why we'd leave it:

- Essentially repetitive gameplay
- No leap in originality

08

PlayStation 2 NERDICT

STAR WARS: STARFIGHTER



Publisher: **Activision** Developer: **LucasArts**
Price: **£19.99** Players: **1-2**

Starfighter is set parallel to the events of *Episode I*, following three new characters whose lives eventually unite in a single cause – to defeat the evil Trade Federation. Expect brilliant dogfights, a great Sniper mode, compelling squad-based tactics, fantastic new ships and weapons, cool mini-games, and fine two-player split-screen competitions. This is a thrilling 3D blaster that's a dream to play, drenched in sparkling visuals and superb sound effects from the *Star Wars* universe. However, it has now been surpassed by its sequel (see left). **■ PF**

STAR WARS: STARFIGHTER

Why we'd buy it:

- Exhilarating space and planet-based combat
- Gorgeous graphics

Why we'd leave it:

- Frame rate problems
- Two-player games more of an afterthought

09

PlayStation 2 NERDICT

ACE COMBAT: DISTANT THUNDER



Publisher: **SCEE** Developer: **Namco**
Price: **£39.99** Players: **1-2**

Namco's flight combat series returns with another flashy and accessible instalment. But although *AC:DT* offers a solid and enjoyable experience, there is nothing to separate it from most other console air combat games. Sure, the graphics and the presentation enhance the combat experience to some degree, but ultimately you are left a little underwhelmed by the lack of imagination. Structure is very linear, and with only 18 overtly familiar missions (take-out enemy craft, destroy ground targets) things are over all too quickly. **■ MW**

ACE COMBAT: DISTANT THUNDER

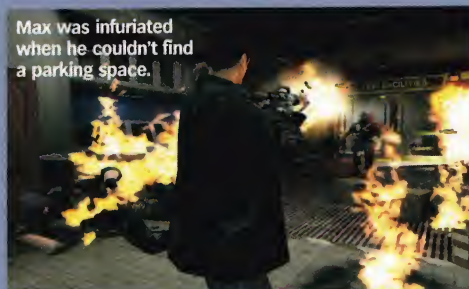
- Why we'd buy it:
- Amazing landscapes
 - Sick presentation
 - Best Ace Combat so far

- Why we'd leave it:
- Little variety in the missions
 - Too short

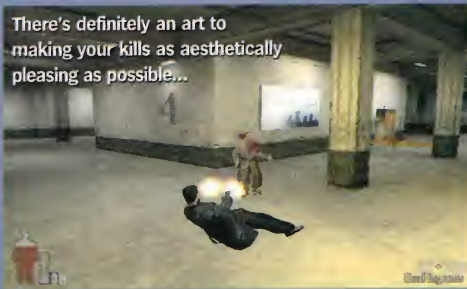
07

PlayStation 2 NERDICT

Max was infuriated when he couldn't find a parking space.



There's definitely an art to making your kills as aesthetically pleasing as possible...



MAX PAYNE

Prepare to be John Woo-ed by the low-voiced lone law enforcer.

Publisher: **Rockstar** Developer: **Remedy** Price: **£39.99** Players: **1**

To say *Max Payne* is an ambitious title would be a gross understatement, but apart from sporting bullet holes around its exterior wall, the game works incredibly well. You'll find yourself immersed in Payne's tortuous universe from the very first scene-setting FMV, to the final climatic boss battle.

Following the violent murder of his family, Payne embarks on a one-man crusade to avenge their deaths and clean up New York. Many scenes are played as flashbacks, complete with poignant voice-overs, each level representing a new chapter in an unravelling saga. All you really need to know is that you explore, shoot, and ask questions later. If at all.

What sets *Max Payne* apart from other action adventures is the cunning use of 'Bullet Time' as a tool for tackling some of the more heavily-populated crime scenes. Time is slowed down at the tap of a button and in this altered state, Payne can dive in slow motion while aiming in real-time – meaning you can potentially clear a room full of gun-toting mobsters

by the time you land. Usually, an interactive cut-scene is triggered when the last hood standing is gunned down and we're treated to a rotating Bullet Time cam that circles the unfortunate wrong-doer.

Unfortunately, slow-down sometimes tarnishes the flow of the game. Also, you are unable to skip cut-scenes, which can become infuriating. But in terms of gritty realism and exciting cinematic action, *Max Payne* is an ideal substitute when you need a break from *GTA III*. **■ Ryan Butt**

MAX PAYNE

- Why we'd buy it:
- Bullet Time
 - Meaty weapons
 - Great story line

- Why we'd leave it:
- Rough frame rate
 - Features missing from the PC version

07

PlayStation 2 NERDICT



NO-ONE LIVES FOREVER

Save the Sixties world from HARM in this imaginative shooter.

Publisher: Vivendi/Sierra Developer: Monolith Price: £39.99 Players: 1

In *NOLF*, you are curvy super-spy Cate Archer. A former thief, Archer now works for anti-terrorist organisation, UNITY, engaged in a fight against HARM, a shadowy cadre of master criminals. What begins as a simple operation to foil the assassination of an ambassador in Morocco, slowly expands into a 15 mission campaign. Although 15 missions may not sound like a lot, each one is split into a number of sub-levels or 'scenes'. In total, there are around 60 mini-missions to complete, mixing bouts of fast-action gunplay with moments of softly-softly stealth.

Admittedly, the first of *NOLF*'s missions is spectacularly dull. Once Morocco is behind you though, things improve. You get armed with gadgets like an explosive lipstick and shades with a built-in camera. The available weapons also get bigger and better, leading to a sporting crossbow, spear gun, sniper rifle and a grenade launcher.

While some levels can be conquered with a brash front-

door assault and a sub-machine gun, others require a little more finesse and patience as you sneak past CCTV cameras and avoid patrolling guards. After Morocco, you get thrown out of an aeroplane without a parachute, ordered to infiltrate a Berlin lab and fight sharks inside a shipwreck. There are also flashback levels (to Cate's criminal past) and a number of boss-battles to fight. *No-One Lives Forever* may not push back the boundaries of PS2 gaming, but it cranks out the FPS basics with style and originality. ■ Dean Evans

NO-ONE LIVES FOREVER

Why we'd buy it:
- Inventive approach to the FPS genre
- Varied missions

Why we'd leave it:
- Despite the detail, the 3D graphics can look ropey.

07

PlayStation 2 NERDICT

THUNDERHAWK: OPERATION PHOENIX



Publisher: Eidos Developer: Core Design
Price: £39.99 Players: 1

The latest title in Core's combat helicopter series carries the distinctive family genes of arcade accessibility and combat sim credentials. Extremist terrorists have caught the nations of the world off guard and you must hit them with your chopper. Action takes in four campaigns, designed to drag your AH-74 gunship through the war hedge backwards. Combat sim fans may find the selective realism too lightweight, but for gamers who want a little meat with their plug-and-play pyrotechnics this a superbly balanced addition to PS2's war chest. ■ PF

THUNDERHAWK: OPERATION PHOENIX

Why we'd buy it:
- Great control system
- Superb array of lethal weapons

Why we'd leave it:
- The graphics could've been sharper
- Too easy for sim fans

07

PlayStation 2 NERDICT

DINO STALKER



Publisher: Capcom Eurosoft Developer: Capcom
Price: £39.99 Players: 1-2

Dino Stalker – the latest outing for the *Gun Survivor* series – is a surprisingly accomplished effort. World War II pilot Mike Wired is shot down and transported through a rift in the space-time continuum (typically) towards a jungle filled with beasts which he must gun down with various interesting weapons. The free-roaming element works better here than in previous *Gun Survivor* titles, while level and monster design are generally strong throughout. All things considered it's a worthy addition to the roster of PS2 light gun shooters. ■ DM

DINO STALKER

Why we'd buy it:
- A tactically enhancing range of power-ups
- Inspired level design

Why we'd leave it:
- Controls can be awkward
- The game's too short

07

PlayStation 2 NERDICT

SILENT SCOPE



Publisher: Konami Developer: KCET
Price: £19.99 Players: 1-2 (via I-Link)

Simplicity is often all a game needs to succeed and *Silent Scope* is the perfect antidote to a rough day at work. Boss annoyed you? Cap a few terrorists. Girlfriend dumped you? Plug a few more. It ain't rocket science, but by God, it's entertaining. The premise is equally simple. You're a police sniper out to rescue a kidnapped President and his family. You pan around the screen looking for targets then aim the crosshairs and put some bullets in their heads. This is taut, exciting stuff and while it lasts it'll test your trigger finger to its limits. ■ SM

SILENT SCOPE

Why we'd buy it:
- Simple but highly entertaining gun violence
- We want to be Leon

Why we'd leave it:
- No two-player action
- Short and rather repetitive

07

PlayStation 2 NERDICT

SILENT SCOPE 2



Publisher: Konami Developer: KCET
Price: £39.99 Players: 1

Although little has changed gameplay-wise since the original, there have been some improvements. We now get two snipers to choose from: Falcon, from the first title, and a freelancer named Jackal. They play from different perspectives, doubling the size of the game. There's a host of new modes, impressive new X-ray and Thermal scopes and some cracking levels including a chemical weapons factory and Tower Bridge. But there's no way around the fact that the biggest appeal of *Silent Scope* in the arcades is lost here – the sniper controller. ■ DM

SILENT SCOPE 2

Why we'd buy it:
- Unique gameplay
- Ace I-Link mode
- Cool new scopes

Why we'd leave it:
- No split-screen two-player action
- Still way too short

08

PlayStation 2 NERDICT

SHOOT-'EM-UP ROUND-UP

If your shoot-'em-up pistol is still only half-cocked, here's more blasting action than a day trip to Moss Side.



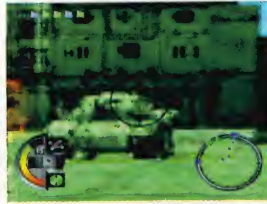
ARMORED CORE 2

■ Ubi Soft ■ £39.99 ■ 1-2 players
Mission-based giant robot shooter with lots of cool weapons and customizable mechs, but repetitive missions and dull visuals. One for Robot Wars geeks.
Score: 07



ARMORED CORE 2: ANOTHER AGE

■ Metro3D ■ £39.99 ■ 1-2 players
More mech blasting fun, made more accessible to Brit gamers who don't know their Gundams from their Jean Claude Van Dammes
Score: 07



WORLD DESTRUCTION LEAGUE: THUNDER TANKS

■ 3DO ■ £39.99 ■ 1-4 players
Mindless arena-based tank battle deathmatch with OTT weapons. Dull in single player, great fun with friends.
Score: 07



FIREBLADE

■ Midway ■ £39.99 ■ 1 player
Visually bland but satisfying-a-while helicopter blaster with neat weapons and gadgets but little in the way of long-term challenge.
Score: 07



GUN GRIFFON BLAZE

■ Swing! ■ £39.99 ■ 1 player
Another mech shooter, this one more of an arena-based free-for-all. Fun for 'bot fans, but with only six levels the experience is shorter than R2D2.
Score: 07



NINJA ASSAULT

■ SCE ■ £39.99 ■ 1-2 players
Okay Namco light gun assault, borrowing much from Sega's House of the Dead, but exchanging zombies for ninjas and, of course, robot spiders.
Score: 05



TUROK EVOLUTION

■ Acclaim ■ £39.99 ■ 1-4 players
The latest incarnation of the Turok FPS series is an all too familiar dinosaur romp with dodgy frame-rate and low-IQ AI. Nearly saved by decent weapons.
Score: 05



VAMPIRE NIGHT

■ SCE ■ £39.99 ■ 1-2 players
Horror-themed light gun shooter with typically silly plot and crappy voice-acting, but a whole lot of gameplay ammunition. Brief but fun.
Score: 05



OPERATION WINBACK

■ Midas ■ £39.99 ■ 1-4 players
Massive mission-based shooter with covert-ops team blasting away at terrorists. The story and visuals are poor, but multiplayer modes entertain.
Score: 05



SOLDIER OF FORTUNE: GOLD EDITION

■ Codemasters ■ £39.99 ■ 1-4 players
Magnificently gory globe-trotting FPS let-down by dated graphics and hideous slow-down.
Score: 05



POLICE 24/7

■ Konami ■ £39.99 ■ 1 player
Mediocre PS2 translation of gimmicky arcade light gun game. Includes an inaccurate motion detector but, hilariously, no light gun support.
Score: 05



X-SQUAD

■ EA ■ £39.99 ■ 1 player
Squad-based shooter which pads out great gun battles with a banal 'plot' and dumb teen dialogue. A cross between the S Club 7 TV shows and MGS.
Score: 05



RESIDENT EVIL SURVIVOR 2 CODE: VERONICA

■ Capcom ■ £44.99 ■ 1 player
Disappointing light gun action based on Code: Veronica X. Poor controls and unsavory monsters are main culprits.
Score: 04



MEN IN BLACK II: ALIEN ESCAPE

■ Infogrames ■ £39.99 ■ 1 player
Predictably poor movie tie-in seemingly designed to frustrate the player. No two-player mode, either.
Score: 04



STAR TREK VOYAGER: ELITE FORCE

■ Codemasters ■ £39.99 ■ 1-4 players
Patchy Medal of Honor-style outing for the crew of the dullest ship in the Star Trek universe.
Score: 04



LETHAL SKIES

■ THQ ■ £39.99 ■ 1-2 players
Absolutely shameless rip-off of Namco's Ace Combat 4, except with really poor flight controls. Some of the graphics are quite nice, though.
Score: 04



TOP GUN

■ Virgin ■ £39.99 ■ 1 player
Simple-minded flight combat over 30-odd missions. Gameplay is tedious and for some reason it lacks the film's gay subtext. And volleyball scene.
Score: 04



IRON ACES 2: BIRDS OF PREY

■ Xicat ■ £39.99 ■ 1 player
WWII flight shooter with detailed campaign mode felled by inescapably boring dogfights. And no two-player!
Score: 04



ARMY MEN: SARGE'S HEROES 2

■ 3DO ■ £34.99 ■ 1-4 players
Laughably incompetent third-person combat plop, hastily evicted from 3DO's cavernous bowels.
Score: 03



SILPHEED: THE LOST PLANET

■ Swing! ■ £39.99 ■ 1 player
Scrappy old skool shooter suffering from terrible slow-down and terminal shortness. It's no R-Type.
Score: 03



ENDGAME

■ Empire ■ £39.99 ■ 1 player
Nice looking light gun fodder which decided to make the lead character bullet-proof. For some reason this has a detrimental effect on gameplay.
Score: 03



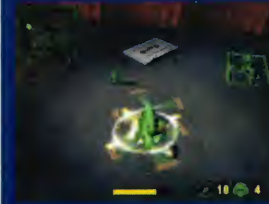
GRADIUS III & IV

■ Konami ■ £34.99 ■ 1-2 players
Re-release of the classic hardcore scrolling shooters. Possibly not the sort of thing PS2 owners want to play on their 128bit machines.
Score: 02



WORLD DESTRUCTION LEAGUE: WARJETZ

■ 3DO ■ £39.99 ■ 1-2 players
Tedious deathmatch fare that's so boring and ugly it could be used as a torture device.
Score: 02



ARMY MEN AIR ATTACK: BLADE'S REVENGE

■ 3DO ■ £39.99 ■ 1-2 players
Absolutely dire helicopter sim from the foot-and-mouth riddled Army Men sty. Should have been burnt on a pyre.
Score: 02



ARMY MEN: GREEN ROGUE

■ 3DO ■ £39.99 ■ 2 players
3DO takes another kick at the Army Men corpse, knocking the rotted teeth from its dead, stinking mouth forever contorted into a soundless scream.
Score: 01

THINK YOU'VE FINISHED?



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THE BOUNCER

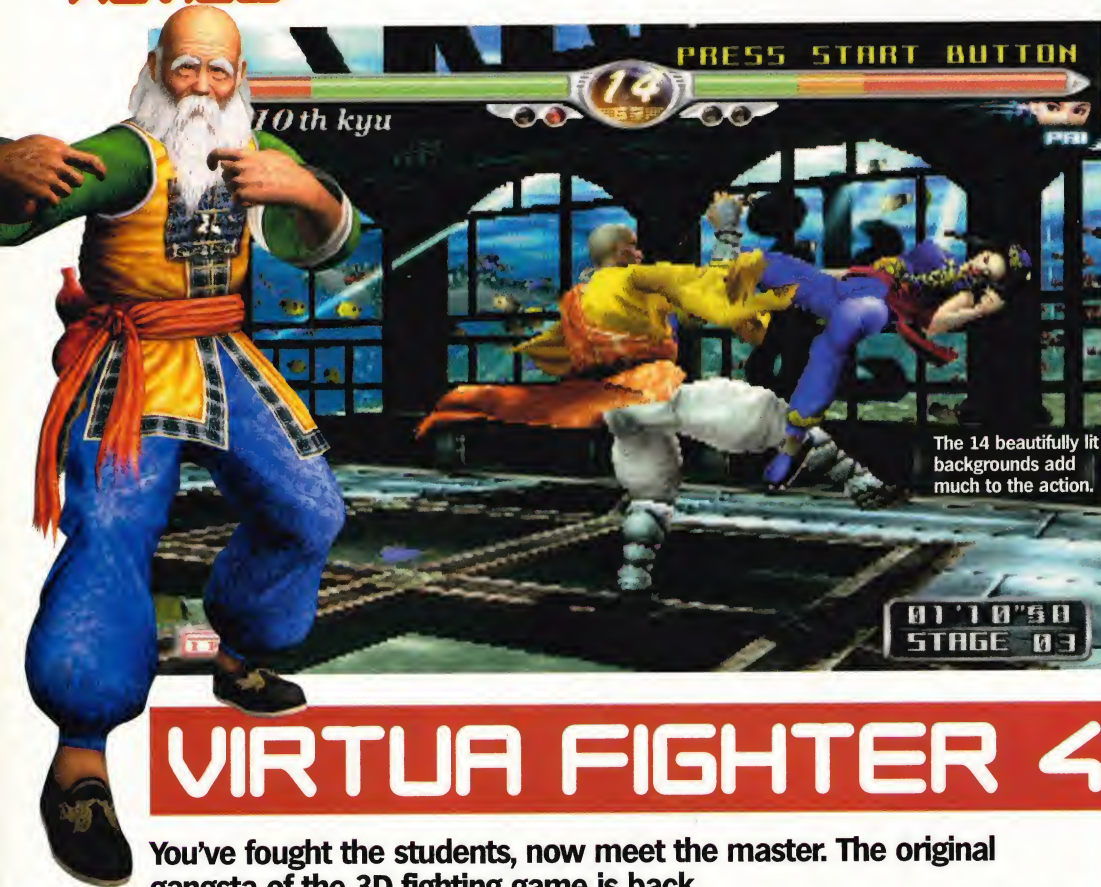
STREET FIGHTER EX 3

BARBARIAN

LEGENDS OF WRESTLING

VICTORIOUS BOXERS

GODAI: ELEMENTAL FORCE



The 14 beautifully lit backgrounds add much to the action.

VIRTUA FIGHTER 4

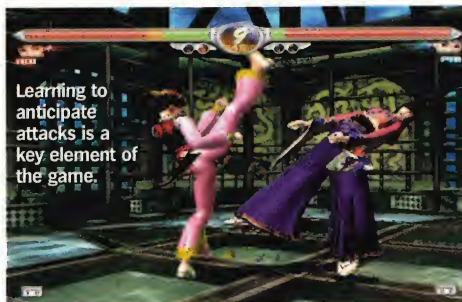
You've fought the students, now meet the master. The original gangsta of the 3D fighting game is back.

Publisher: SCEE Developer: Sega AM2
Price: £39.99 Players: 1-2

As Ang Lee recently proved with the dazzling *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, kung fu entertainment doesn't have to involve dumb story lines and ridiculous characters. It can be intelligent, and it can look beautiful. The *Virtua Fighter* series is sort of like the *Crouching Tiger* of the beat-'em-up world. It's never stooped to include magical fireballs (*Street Fighter*), or girls with enormous breasts (*Dead Or Alive*). It simply simulates a range of real martial arts as realistically as possible with a cool selection of fighters.

Want to know how realistic? How precise? Each attacking is broken down into three stages: execution (the time it takes to perform the move) the impact itself and then the time it takes for the attacker to recover. You can respond to a hit in at the latter stage (ie, after you've been smacked) but the best thing to do is to counter while your opponent is still at the executing point, thereby getting in a block or a hit of your own before they even strike. Gradually, the emphasis shifts from blindly flailing at the other fighter, to reading their moves and remembering which subtle hand, leg or body twists lead to which attacks. And even this

Learning to anticipate attacks is a key element of the game.



//In effect, the game grows with you and the challenge extends to meet your experience//

isn't the end of it. Characters also have moves which feign one form of attack (say a high kick) but then deliver the opposite. So in effect, the game grows with you and the challenge extends to meet your experience.

Each VF4 character has a huge range of 'ready-made' combos - strings of kicks and punches which form powerful and visually impressive sequences. However, observant players will also notice that your fighter ends some moves in a stance that other moves and combos begin with. So in effect, you can begin to piece together your own sequences, cutting and pasting techniques to create totally individual attacks.

It's a brilliantly designed fighting system, as intricate and organic as a rainforest ecosystem. You also get some astonishingly visceral moves, like Kage's Izuna Otoshi throw in which he lobbs opponents high into the air, somersaults backward, catches them on their way down then slams them into the ground. Or what about Jeffry's choice little move where he grabs a fighter, lifts the poor bugger high over his head, then smashes him (or her - he isn't sexist) over his knees. Somehow rapid button stomping loses its appeal once you realise it'll very rarely give you access to stuff like this.



"You bitch! I told you I was wearing green today!"

BIG BOSS

She's hard, she's skilful, and she's see-through! Following true *Virtua Fighter* tradition, the Arcade mode ends with a showdown against mercurial cyborg fighter, Dural. She appears Invisible in Easy mode, but gains substance if you challenge her in Normal or Hard. She combines attacks from several different fighters.



1. In Easy mode, Dural can only just be seen. Which, come to think of it, isn't very easy at all.



2. Take on Arcade mode in Normal or above and she appears as a kind of female Silver Surfer.



3. Should you find a metallic videogame character sexy? No, it's possibly the saddest thing you could admit to.

Learning to read and appreciate the individual styles of the fighters is made so much easier by the beautiful character design and animation. You know Lion uses mantis-style kung fu just by looking at his claw-like hand and wrist positions, and his leaping stabbing attacks. Also, through Jacky you can glimpse the origins of Bruce Lee's Jeet Kune Do - especially the moves influenced by Muhammad Ali. For example, Jacky has a combo that lets him quickly shuffle backwards before darting forward with a heavy jab to the body - a clear reference to Ali's 'float like a butterfly, sting like a bee' philosophy. When the fighters meet, the impact is almost palpable. The animation is as smooth as freshly spilt blood and the interaction is gut-wrenchingly authentic. You hear bones snap, you feel lungs collapse.

Virtua Fighter 4 is not a game for casual post-pub pugilists. Its really impressive moves come from strings of six or seven combined D-pad directions and kicks, punches and guards. Learning this stuff is going to take time. VF4 is for life, not just for Christmas. ■ Keith Stuart

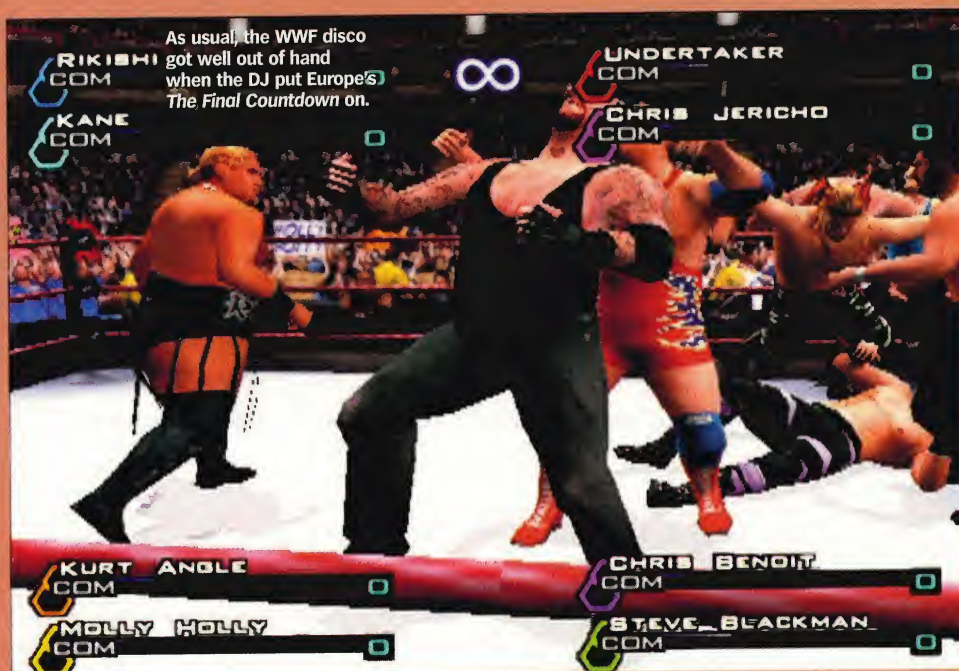
VIRTUA FIGHTER 4

Why we'd buy it:
- Lovely visuals
- Realistic moves
- It'll take years to master

Why we'd leave it:
- No crazy fireball moves
- You really, really have to put the hours in



PlayStation 2 NERDICT



As usual, the WWF disco got well out of hand when the DJ put Europe's The Final Countdown on.

WWF SMACKDOWN! 'JUST BRING IT!'

Weighing in at 45 pounds (sterling) from Yokohoma, Japan, it's the wrestling game big daddy.

Publisher: THQ Developer: Yuke's
Price: £44.99 Players: 1-4

Nobody likes WWF. They idolise it, devour it, follow it with unshakable passion. 'Like' is for L wusses. Luckily for publisher THQ, WWF's worldwide fanbase was suitably enthusiastic about their two PSone wrestling smashes. Luckier still for PS2 owners, while 'Just Bring It!' is hardly revolutionary, it's the most faithful and thoroughly entertaining recreation of the WWF phenomenon ever.

Story mode lets you play the full, punishing WWF season as an existing superstar (there are 35 to choose from) or as a home-made rookie. Exhibition mode lets you sample a staggering 78 styles of match, including Single, Tag, Six Man Tag, Handicap, Royal Rumble, King of the Ring, Hardcore, Falls Count Anywhere, Survival and Special. Some are self explanatory and nearly all involve pinning your opponent(s) for a three count in some form. The pick of the Specials is



the classic TLC (Tables, Ladders, Chairs) match – the objects in question are all fair game as weapons.

The Create A Superstar mode is outrageous with thousands of customisable features, including tattoos, head-gear, moves and taunts. Plus, players can now take their wrestler from ringside to backstage and make

choices that alter their career. Bump into an official in the locker room, for instance, and he tells you that commissioner William Regal is looking for you. Do you trudge to his

office? Go and he offers you a title shot. Head to the VIP lounge, however, and you could end up having a Falls Count Anywhere match with a disgruntled Kane.

The match-ups themselves benefit from wonderfully fluid animations and punishing opponent AI, but your wrestler still lacks intelligence when interacting with opponents. Pull off a throw and you've got to wait until the animation ends before you can follow up. Fail to get in quickly and you could be waiting longer as you're knocked senseless in a prolonged GBH session. There's an inherent lack of control responsiveness too.

Nevertheless, *JBI!* is a blast and as full-on entertainment it's hard to beat. Add a largely successful

OUT AND ABOUT

Falls Count Anywhere matches open up a wealth of extra-curricular showdown locations. Here's just a handful and where it could all lead.



1. Commissioner's Room.

Features: William Regal's Union Jack and mini bar.
Exits to: Corridor.



2. Lobby

Features: Dual-level action, concession stand and a wide selection of vending machines.
Exits to: Stage, Plaza and Corridor.



3. Plaza

Features: Amazing scale.
Exits to: Lobby, Parking, WWF Times Square.



4. Parking

Features: Very few cars and grimy asphalt.
Exits to: Corridor, Plaza.

play-by-play commentary by ringside regulars Michael Cole and Tazz, plus tons of unlockable features and WWF *SmackDown! Just Bring It!* is as complete a package as you could hope for. If the core gameplay had evolved to match the depth of options this would be a genre-trampling essential purchase. All the same, it remains a must-have for WWF fans and a refreshingly wanton, tongue-in-cheek alternative to po-faced beat-'em-ups. ■ Paul Fitzpatrick



// The Create A Superstar mode is outrageous, with thousands of customisable features//



It's the move they quite simply call 'Serious Sexual Assault'

WWF SMACKDOWN! 'JUST BRING IT!'

Why we'd buy it:

- Loads of options
- Stunning Create A Superstar mode

Why we'd leave it:

- Gameplay doesn't always reward skill
- Hey, it is wrestling

08

PlayStation 2 VERDICT

GUILTY GEAR X



Publisher: **Virgin** Developer: **Sammy**
Price: **£34.99** Players: **1-2**

From the minute this 2D fighter loads it's obvious Sammy has gone to town on the visuals, utilising PS2's high-res mode to give everything a razor-sharp edge. There's incredible depth here too. Aside from standard kicks and punches, try subterranean specials like Overdrive, Faultless Defence and Roman Cancel. Add some vicious One-Hit Kill attacks and you've an army of tasty manoeuvres to call upon. Proving that the 2D fighting genre is still very much alive and kicking, this is a hardcore game for the new millennium. ■ **NR**

GUILTY GEAR X

Why we'd buy it:
- Beautiful to look at
- Perfectly balanced and supremely addictive

Why we'd leave it:
- Capcom Vs SNK 2 is equally cool
- We have to have 3D

08

PlayStation 2 **VERDICT**



Ryo's fireballs are present and correct and looking more spectacular than ever before

CAPCOM VS SNK 2

Get ready for the ultimate encounter of beat-'em-up heavyweights.

Publisher: **Capcom Eurosoft** Developer: **Capcom** Price: **£39.99** Players: **1-2**

In the 2D beat-'em-up hall of fame there are two series that stand toe-to-toe: Capcom's *Street Fighter* and SNK's *The King of Fighters*. Despite their legendary status, neither series has appeared in 2D form over here in PS2 land until now, with this sequel to the Dreamcast stormer, *Capcom Vs SNK*. Dubbed *Match of the Millennium*, it finally pitted the two biggest names in 2D fighting against each other. Think *Virtua Fighter Vs Tekken* for the flat generation and you'll get the idea.

If you're lucky enough to have sampled SNK's *The King of Fighters*, you'll be aware of its unforgiving tendencies – only strict aficionados need apply. On the other hand, *Street Fighter* is a far more recognisable beast, having appeared on every gaming format in numerous incarnations. *Capcom Vs SNK 2* puts the respective characters – Ken, Ryu, Chun-Li et al representing Capcom, and the likes of Terry Bogard and Geese Howard turning out for SNK – in their beefiest form yet, with huge, colourful sprites tearing across the

spectacular backdrops. Along with *Guilty Gear X*, this is some of the most wonderful 2D eye candy ever seen.

Years of fighting experience shines through in the gameplay and you can choose to play in the 'groove' of either series with all the trademark moves and characters available. In two-player mode playtime is endless – simple rules, infinite possibilities, all about action and reaction. The result? The best-looking, best-playing and most authoritative Versus game of them all. ■ **Neil Randall**

CAPCOM VS SNK 2

Why we'd buy it:
- Quick to learn
- Impossible to master
- Endless two-player fun

Why we'd leave it:
- Guilty Gear X is equally cool
- We have to have 3D

08

PlayStation 2 **VERDICT**



DYNASTY WARRIORS 3

Watch your back: a thousand men want you dead.

Publisher: **THQ/KOEI** Developer: **Omega Force** Price: **£44.99** Players: **1-2**

Throwing you right into the action is what the *Dynasty Warriors* series does best. While tedious PC games of the Japanese feudal genre might provide a big map overview with units to push about, *Dynasty Warriors* plonks you straight in the shoes of a commander at ground level. There's no giving orders. You lead by example, and that means charging to the frontline and whacking the enemy round the head with the biggest piece of iron you can find. Nothing is more satisfying than ploughing into a crowd of enemy soldiers with a sword whirling, scattering them to the four winds, or seeking out an enemy general and defeating him mano-a-mano, so that his troops disband and flee.

With a multitude of items, moves and characters to unlock (there are many different generals to select and take into battles, each with different skills), *Dynasty Warriors 3* will keep you occupied for months. It is an immense game pretty much unique in its blending of genres – part beat-'em-up,

part first-person shooter and part strategy sim. But what will keep you returning (apart from the new two player co-op mode) is the superb balance – the battles are poised on a knife edge and your input makes an enormous difference. This gives real satisfaction as you prove the adage that one person can make a difference. The only drawbacks are that the fighting can get repetitive (battle-fatigue is likely to set in after a 90-minute session). If you can cope with that, give this huge game a go. ■ **Steve Faragher**

DYNASTY WARRIORS 3

Why we'd buy it:
- Incredibly absorbing
- Hardcore head-mashing
- Satisfying RPG elements

Why we'd leave it:
- Gets repetitive

08

PlayStation 2 **VERDICT**

DYNASTY WARRIORS 2



Publisher: **Midas Interactive** Developer: **KOEI**
Price: **£39.99** Players: **1**

Dynasty Warriors 2 brings the Three Kingdoms period of 220-280AD China to life, in all its sword-clashing, blood-letting, horse-galloping glory. One-kilometre square maps teem with hundreds of swordsmen in a visual orgy of epic swordplay. It's a disappointment then that the fighting itself is so limited – most fights involve repeatedly bashing a single button. Plus, running into battle is hindered by your trusty warrior's painfully slow speed, and allied generals prefer to admire the scenery than come to your aid. But it's an enjoyable romp all the same. ■ **MG**

DYNASTY WARRIORS 2

Why we'd buy it:
- Epic battles
- Lasting challenge
- Clever action/strategy mix

Why we'd leave it:
- Limited gameplay
- Time-consuming
- Questionable AI

07

PlayStation 2 **VERDICT**



TEKKEN 4

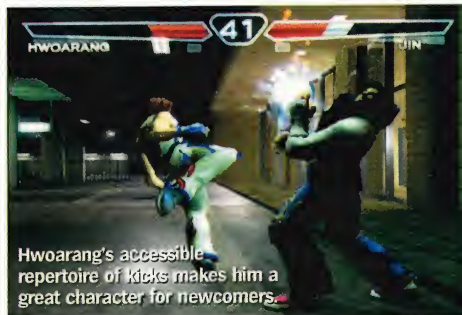
The King of Iron Fist beckons again, but is the magic starting to fade?



Old favourites Law and King go toe-to-toe in the car park – one of 12 atmospheric locations.



Yes, it's the trusty 'knicker-showing kick'.



Hwoarang's accessible repertoire of kicks makes him a great character for newcomers.

Publisher: **SCEE** Developer: **Namco**
Price: **£39.99** Players: **1-2**

Upon loading *Tekken 4* for the first time, the Namco logo precedes the kind of jaw-dropping cinematics that have become a trademark of the developer. Opening with tournament organiser Heihachi tossing his lifeless son's corpse into a volcano, the scene then shifts on 20 years to show Heihachi's soldiers raiding the G-Corporation (a biogenetics firm) to steal the devil gene. Subsequently, a full-on war ensues. By the time the vivid imagery fades, your heart will be racing and your sweaty, fumbling hands won't be able to press **△** quickly enough.

Selecting Story Battle reveals the ten initially selectable characters – the rest are added to the tally each time you complete the game. Amongst the first ten are the three main new characters, so you can instantly take a step into the great unknown and get to work mastering their radical new techniques. Craig Marduk is a hulking tudo fighter who was imprisoned after killing Armor King, Steve Fox is a British boxer and Christie Monteiro is a female protégé of Eddy Gordo and has adopted his Capoeira fighting style almost move for move. But before you even think about appreciating the new moves of the debutantes, you can't help but notice the lush, picturesque visuals.

Long gone are the 'back-step to infinity' open plan arenas. In their place are detailed locations with pronounced boundaries and objects for you to slam your opponents into. The *Tekken 4* coin-op came with the apt slogan "Control the walls, control the fights" – by pinning your opponent against a wall, the force of your blows is doubled. Other objects litter the playing field such as parked cars, pillars and even people, and by forcing your opponent against them, you'll inflict extra damage. For the unfortunate party pinned back, Namco has introduced a new 'position change' system with which you can feint and grapple your way out, reversing the roles in the process.

As you'd expect from Namco's benchmark series, *Tekken 4* is a solid fighting game. However, with no innovative new gameplay ideas or features apart from the 'walls', it's far from a titanic leap forward for the beat-'em-up genre. Roll on *Soul Calibur 2*! ■ **Ryan Butt**

TEKKEN 4

Why we'd buy it:
- Classic Tekken gameplay
- New characters and moves

Why we'd leave it:
- Not a great leap forward
- No decent sub-games

07

PlayStation 2 **VERDICT**



TEKKEN TAG TOURNAMENT

Publisher: **SCEE** Developer: **Namco**
Price: **£19.99** Players: **1-2**

Tekken Tag is little more than an update of PSone's *Tekken 3* but sporting its graphical Sunday best and one glorious saving grace – the inclusion of a new tag option allowing you to bring a partner into the brawl at a tactically sound moment. Despite the arrival of its slightly superior sequel (see left), this is still a fighting game with tons of replayability to it, and plenty to learn. It's also still got the most entertaining and varied bunch of characters of any beat-'em-up. Oh, and there's the massive bonus of the superb *Tekken Bowl* sub-game. ■ **BL**

TEKKEN TAG TOURNAMENT

Why we'd buy it:
- Tagging adds playability
- Loads of cool characters
- It's a Tekken game

Why we'd leave it:
- Resembles Tekken 3 too closely
- Some slowdown

08

PlayStation 2 **VERDICT**



Beckham's new look shocked his younger fans.
1'45.22



Charging headlong into a melee brandishing a sword? It's just your usual Saturday afternoon in Moss Side.

STATE OF EMERGENCY

More lawless fun from the world's least responsible game publisher.

Publisher: **Rockstar** Developer: **Vis** Price: **£39.99** Players: **1**

Set in the near future, *State Of Emergency* features the struggle of a resistance group named Freedom against The Corporation, an omnipotent Big Brother-like association that subjugates the population through violence and mind control. Determined to bring The Corporation to its knees, you must destabilise the city through any means necessary. In other words kill anything that moves and trash everything that doesn't.

The action takes place in four riot-torn distinct areas. Armed gangs openly attack people in the street, looters dash around carrying stolen electrical goods, citizens attack each other remorselessly and the corporation tries desperately to regain control. As a Freedom agent you descend into this pandemonium and, basically, make it a whole lot worse. It is quite simply a non-stop orgy of violence and

destruction. There are literally hundreds of figures scurrying around either looking for trouble or cowering in terror and they're all ripe for the slaughter. If you're uncomfortable with the ethics of glorified mass murder, or want the varied gameplay of say, *Grand Theft Auto III*, stay away. But for a quick slice of tension-beating urban violence, *State Of Emergency* is better for you than hanging around The Dog & Psycho Inn at closing time.

■ **Adrian Lawton**

STATE OF EMERGENCY

Why we'd buy it:

- Cool cartoon visuals
- Non-stop action
- We're angry

Why we'd leave it:

- Seriously dubious content
- It's a total no-brainer
- If we had morals

07

PlayStation.2 VERDICT

DEAD OR ALIVE 2



Publisher: **SCEE** Developer: **Tecmo**
Price: **£19.99** Players: **1-4**

Not very often does a beat-'em-up encroach on Tekken's territory and come away unscathed. *DOA2* attempts it with bravado (and bouncing bosoms). The characters are all gorgeous pouting strumpets (apart from the blokes), the scraps unfold at a storming pace and the superb interactive environments allow you to smash opponents through scenery and jump down to lower levels. If only it had a little more depth we'd be looking at a serious rival to *Virtua Fighter 4* and *Tekken 4*; as it is though, *DOA2* is a quality contender for third place. ■ **BL**

DEAD OR ALIVE 2

Why we'd buy it:

- Highly inventive combat
- Blistering frame rate
- Pure bravado

Why we'd leave it:

- May not appreciate its hidden depths
- Too fast for many

07

PlayStation.2 VERDICT

READY TO RUMBLE: ROUND 2



Publisher: **Midway** Developer: **Midway**
Price: **£39.99** Players: **1-2**

The original *Ready 2 Rumble* smashed itself a new niche with the ferocity of a steroid-fuelled Mike Tyson. Whereas previous boxing efforts were grimly serious affairs, *R2R* presented the sport as some crazed circus while still operating as a very effective fighter. Now, with plenty of new characters and the power of PS2 to push it onwards, it's back. Just as silly and just as effective. In terms of long-term thrills *R2R* can't compete with traditional beat-'em-ups. But for sheer pick-up-and-play brawling, this game is a knockout. ■ **BL**

READY TO RUMBLE: ROUND 2

Why we'd buy it:

- Daff as a brush
- Thoroughly playable
- Impressive animation

Why we'd leave it:

- Not enough depth
- Appeal will wane
- Humour wears thin

07

PlayStation.2 VERDICT

BLOODY ROAR 3



Publisher: **Virgin Interactive** Developer: **Hudson Soft**
Price: **£39.99** Players: **1-2**

Despite the slick animation, this second sequel to the animal-themed fighter doesn't really push any boundaries. The human stars morph seamlessly into their beastly alter-egos, with Long's tigerish good looks allied to a range of powerful, fluid moves, and short-sighted Bakuryu's mole delivering devastating hand attacks. Pleasingly, Uriko even keeps her stockings and suspenders on over her rabbit's body. The fact is though, *Tekken 4* and *Virtua Fighter 4* do it all so much better. This coin-op conversion is fast and furious but lacks real depth. ■ **SF**

BLOODY ROAR 3

Why we'd buy it:

- Shape-changer twist
- Bunnies in stockings
- Good looking fun

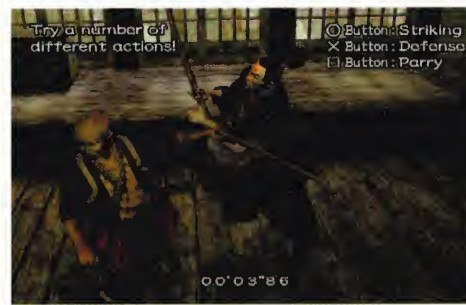
Why we'd leave it:

- Bad storyline
- Lack of innovation
- Rivals are better

06

PlayStation.2 VERDICT

KENGO: MASTER OF BUSHIDO



Publisher: **Ubi Soft** Developer: **LightWeight**
Price: **£29.99** Players: **1-2**

Created by the team behind PSone's *Bushido Blade*, this is a departure from button-bashing madness and rewards inch-perfect movement instead. Based on the Samurai clans of Japan, *Kengo's* swordplay is actually rather simplistic, with three buttons for striking, parrying and blocking and just three special combos per fighter. This works in the game's favour since the player must contemplate every move carefully. The combat is graceful, swift and bloody, making this an enjoyable fighter that injects precision and skill into the genre. ■ **SM**

KENGO: MASTER OF BUSHIDO

Why we'd buy it:

- Intense one-on-one
- Great two-player
- Beautiful combos

Why we'd leave it:

- Not a huge amount of skill involved
- Rather short-lived

06

PlayStation.2 VERDICT

BARBARIAN



Publisher: **Virgin Interactive** Developer: **Saffire**
Price: **£39.99** Players: **1-4**

From all four corners of the fantasy world, combatants have gathered for a huge illegal fighting tournament. These pugilists include forest dwellers, undead warriors and, naturally, barely-clad barbarians. The large, scrolling levels are nicely designed and superbly lit. The combat is varied, taking in magic and sword-wielding as well as fisticuffs. And while the animation is often stiff, you hardly notice it in the heat of battle. Interestingly, you can pick up objects and use them as weapons – just wait till you try bludgeoning your enemies with a corpse... **DE**

BARBARIAN

Why we'd buy it:
- Fast-paced multi-fighter action
- Big, multi-level arenas

Why we'd leave it:
- Can be confusing with four or more fighters on-screen at once

07

PlayStation 2 **VERDICT**

STREET FIGHTER EX3



Publisher: **Capcom** Developer: **Capcom**
Price: **£39.99** Players: **1-4**

In stark contrast to the rendered beauty of Tekken Tag Tournament, SFEX3 is overflowing with clunky, artificial-looking characters. Admittedly, elements of the old magic are still there and SF veterans will be glad to know it reliably produces a bloody good scrap with lavish special effects. The biggest new feature is the tagging. Pair off two characters to combine forces and smash the living souls out of the opposition. There's also an interesting Character Edit Mode. But like a broken down beat-'em-up tractor, this series could really do with a new engine. **RB**

STREET FIGHTER EX3

Why we'd buy it:
- Tag combos
- Bloody good scraps
- Old times' sake

Why we'd leave it:
- Dodgy graphics
- Same as predecessors
- Tekken is better

07

PlayStation 2 **VERDICT**

THE BOUNCER



Publisher: **SCEE** Developer: **Square**
Price: **£39.99** Players: **1-4**

This is a brave attempt by Square to employ storytelling in the fighting genre by emulating the mood of a movie. Sadly, this plan is attached to a mediocre beat-'em-up (albeit with a top four-player mode) with longevity issues and essential gaming elements occasionally sacrificed for a better camera angle. Traditional Japanese themes of love, honour and betrayal infuse this fun, accessible brawler as you take the part of a bouncer out to rescue a young girl kidnapped by an evil corporation. Sadly, it all smacks of promise yet to be realised. **SF**

THE BOUNCER

Why we'd buy it:
- Looks amazing
- Brilliant storyline
- Accessible and fun

Why we'd leave it:
- Too easy
- Too short
- Value for money?

06

PlayStation 2 **VERDICT**

LEGENDS OF WRESTLING



Publisher: **Acclaim** Developer: **Acclaim**
Price: **£39.99** Players: **1-4**

Legends Of Wrestling boldly attempts to push the 'sports-entertainment' envelope by basing your success on how popular your grappler is, relegating match results to secondary status. Popularity is gained through pulling off special moves, drawing blood or even smacking the ref. It's a unique but flawed device. With the emphasis taken away from winning, you lose the impetus for victory. On top of that, the 42 characters are mostly nobodies and their special moves all work the same. One new idea does not make a good game. **OH**

LEGENDS OF WRESTLING

Why we'd buy it:
- The popularity rating
- Reversals add to gameplay

Why we'd leave it:
- Too much button-mashing
- Obscure characters
- SmackDown! is far better

05

PlayStation 2 **VERDICT**

VICTORIOUS BOXERS



Publisher: **Empire Interactive** Developer: **ESP**
Price: **£39.99** Players: **1-2**

Victorious Boxers is approachable, playable and provides a graded challenge as you slug your way past 40 different opponents. The ducking, swaying and thrusting movements are commendably accurate and the control system is a determined attempt to introduce elements of realism to the genre. But in the heat of battle the game far too often confuses a sway for a sidestep, leaving you vulnerable, and more than 50% of punches are swung at thin air. Realistic boxing games just aren't a lot of fun – that's why they invented beat-'em-ups. **SR**

VICTORIOUS BOXERS

Why we'd buy it:
- Realistic direction of boxing action
- Good character models

Why we'd leave it:
- Dull, repetitive game structure with tedious characters

04

PlayStation 2 **VERDICT**

GODAI: ELEMENTAL FORCE



Publisher: **3DO** Developer: **3DO**
Price: **£19.99** Players: **1**

There's only one way to approach GoDai, and that's as one of those low-budget, poorly-dubbed kung fu films. It's a free-roaming beat-'em-up in which you hover around a series of detailed levels and struggle with the controls and 'eccentric' camera. You play a young ninja out to avenge the death of someone or other, and you're able to collect weapons as you go. GoDai is a game of good intentions gone badly wrong. It's stuffed with ideas but it's been poorly implemented to the point of unplayability. The only level it works on is martial arts parody... **PR**

GODAI: ELEMENTAL FORCE

Why we'd buy it:
- For a chuckle

Why we'd leave it:
- It's just rubbish

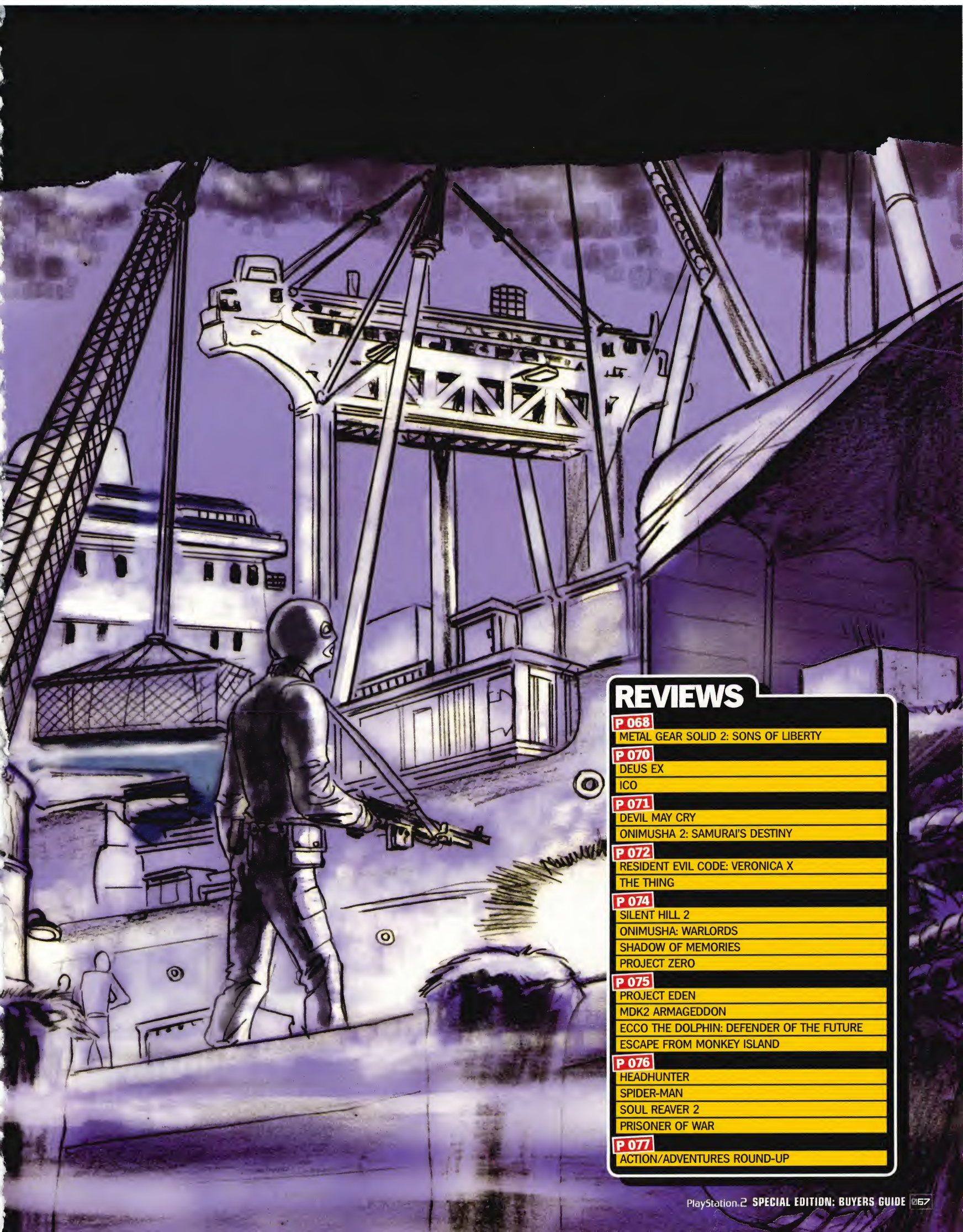
02

PlayStation 2 **VERDICT**

ACTION/ADVENTURES

Where exploration, combat, and engrossing cinematic story lines combine, usually with the odd evil megalomaniac and arsenal of hardcore weaponry thrown in for good measure.





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HEADHUNTER

SPIDER-MAN

SOUL REAVER 2

PRISONER OF WAR

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ACTION/ADVENTURES ROUND-UP

HANGING WITH MR SNAKE

Ahhh. They grow up so quickly, don't they? Look at the new tricks little Snakey has learned. Who's a clever boy, then?

初級 Beginner

Press Δ button near handrail to jump over handrail and hang to avoid enemy. You can move sideways and also enter First Person View.

■ Hanging

Press Δ button near handrail to jump over handrail and hang to avoid enemy. You can move sideways and also enter First Person View.

1. Hanging out.

Don't encourage him, he's only showing off. Little monkey.

初級 Beginner

Press Δ button to climb up objects with heights close to your waist. You cannot climb up heights too high.

■ Climb up Objects

Press Δ button to climb up objects with heights close to your waist. You cannot climb up heights too high.

2. Climbing.

Get down from there right now! What did we tell you?

中級 Intermediate

Press Δ button to roll into enemy. If you roll into enemy, you can knock down enemy. Effective when surrounded by enemies.

■ Rolling Attack

If you roll into enemy, you can knock down enemy. Effective when surrounded by enemies.

3. Tumbling.

You'll have someone's eye out if you're not careful.

中級 Intermediate

Press L2/R2 button during First Person View to step sideways. Press L2 & R2 buttons together to stretch up. Effective during gun fights while hiding behind objects.

■ Step Sideways

Press L2/R2 button during First Person View to step sideways. Press L2 & R2 buttons together to stretch up. Effective during gun fights while hiding behind objects.

5. Jump out shot.

That is a toy gun isn't it? Snake? Snaaaaake!

上級 Advanced

During Corner View, equip weapon & press \square button to jump out from corner to point gun. You can attack quickly from behind object.

■ Jump-out Shot

During Corner View, equip weapon & press \square button to jump out from corner to point gun. You can attack quickly from behind object.

5. Jump out shot.

That is a toy gun isn't it? Snake? Snaaaaake!



New character Raiden may look like a ladyboy but his stealth and combat capabilities almost match those of Mr Snake.



New to MGS2 is the ability to target and fire any weapon from the first-person perspective.



Sneak took the Hide & Seek contest extremely seriously.

METAL GEAR SOLID 2: SONS OF LIBERTY

It's the world's most anticipated videogame. It's the finest exponent of the 'interactive movie' Holy Grail yet seen. It's chock full of innovation and surprises. But is it actually any good? Well, what do you think...

Publisher: Konami Developer: KCEJ
Price: £44.99 Players: 1

In the hands of Hideo Kojima and his talented team, the cold, technological potential of the PS2's Emotion Engine has been harnessed in the pursuit of cinematic storytelling on an epic and moving scale. What's more, they've put together one of the all time great videogames and a single incontrovertible argument for owning a PlayStation 2. Not bad for a sequel.

Solid Snake's new adventure continues to follow the proliferation of the bipedal super tanks codenamed Metal Gear and the nefarious powers who will do anything to get their hands on the new technology. In short, this means terrorists, armed takeovers of industrial structures (a tanker and an offshore facility on this occasion) and crappy weather.

Once again, you play a lone operative whose speciality is infiltration by stealth and, as before, you receive information, advice and 'save' mission data from your support team and a few surprise characters via the silent comms device, the Codec.

The big shock is Kojima's ballsy decision to hand over hero duties to a brand new character a third of the way through the game. When the action restarts with Raiden – and with subtle changes to the game interface – it is a real jolt. The sense of disorientation you feel

perfectly matches that of the rookie Foxhound operative you now control. Kojima is saying 'you think you know Metal Gear? Think again.'

From then on any complacency you might have been feeling as a veteran of MGS1 evaporates and the real story begins.

Moreover, MGS2 is a thorough evolution of the species in just about every way possible from the control system up. Snake and Raiden have learnt some very useful new tricks: weapons can be fired from a first-person perspective, you can step out from behind corners briefly, climb up objects, hang over railings to avoid detection and much, much more. In fact, it doesn't take long before you realise that experimenting in MGS2 will nearly always reap rewards.

These refinements combine with an amazing level of environmental interaction to give you an almost dizzying choice of options in any of the game's many battles, puzzles and sub missions. Can't shoot through the guard's riot shield? Shoot the pipe above his head instead and scald him with a jet of high-pressure steam. Can't get out of a postal room filled with enemies?



// MGS2 is a thorough evolution of the species in just about every way possible //

Climb inside a cardboard box and escape via the room's conveyor belt. In short, if you can imagine it, it is possible.

Then there's the graphical detail. Flour sacks spill their contents when hit by stray rounds. Ice cubes spilled in a gunfight melt individually. Emerge from a swim, or indoors from a cold, wet exterior and the screen will mist up briefly. Hell, you can even shoot individual leaves off plants should you have the time and the inclination. What does this have to do with gameplay? Directly, not that much. Indirectly however, this collection of myriad details help to build an unprecedented level of realism that makes total immersion into the game's sinuous story line a done deal.

Metal Gear Solid 2 easily lives up to the frenzied hype surrounding it. If you own a PS2 and you haven't yet bought it, it's time to ask yourself why. ■ Paul Fitzpatrick

METAL GEAR SOLID 2: SONS OF LIBERTY

Why we'd buy it:
- The seamless videogame quality
- We own a PS2

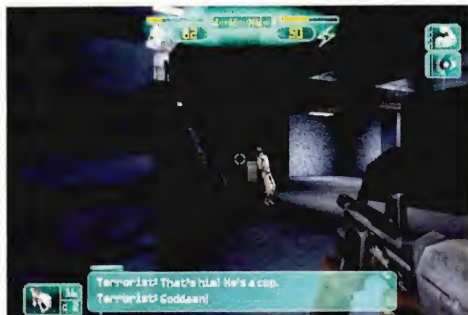
Why we'd leave it:
- Well, there are a lot of cut scenes to get through
- Actually, we wouldn't

10

PlayStation 2 **VERDICT**

DEUS EX

Ion Storm finds God – and a whole twisted bundle of near future apocalypse terror – in Sony's black box.



The game world is incredibly detailed. Shoot someone, come back later and flies will be buzzing around them.



It's time to try out that new 'charm the ladies' cybernetic augmentation.

Publisher: Eidos Developer: Ion Storm
Price: £39.99 Players: 1

Set in the not too distant future, *Deus Ex* puts you in the leather boots of JC Denton, an anti-terrorism agent who must rid the world of vile organisations that make Bin Laden's lot look like trick or treaters. Denton is a cybernetically enhanced machine of a man with a wealth of skills that cater for every possible scenario in the field of duty.

Before play commences you get 5,000 credits to blow on skills like hacking or firing heavy artillery. With your wad spent, it's off to the Big Apple where a gang of tool-up terrorists is hiding out in the Statue Of Liberty with one of your agents held hostage. So what do you do, hot shot?

What sets *Deus Ex* apart is the freedom of choice. Each level is non-linear so you can tackle it how you like. When infiltrating a terrorist warehouse, for instance, you can go in the front door guns blazing, hit them from below by swimming in via the sewers, or surprise them by finding a way up onto the roof and then raining shots down from above. Of course, this is if you decide to fight at all. Killing people isn't ever your main objective –

these usually involve locating a prisoner or finding a specific object – so you can do without guns altogether and creep around in the shadows. Also, you can choose to take any path through a particular section without being cut off from other possible paths because all routes ultimately lead to the same place. There are loading breaks to endure at certain junctures of the stage, but even this doesn't prohibit where you go. Unlike, say, *Max Payne*, you can backtrack through levels and even return to old missions to search for missed information and stock up with ammunition and gizmos such as lockpicks, code breakers and medkits.

The unlocking of new areas is rewarded with skill points which you can then use to enhance your abilities and technical know-how. The learning curve is perfectly balanced so that you can just pick up and play while gradually learning how to use new stuff you've collected.

The only real qualm is that the graphics don't match the gameplay in the Innovation department. Frame rate and glitching are never issues, but lack of imagination in the background design is evident. It's supposed to be bleak, but environments can look drab and featureless. Also, there's no Multiplayer mode – the maze-like levels are crying out for some deathmatch activity. But then *Deus Ex* is truly a thinking man's game and to dumb it down with mere gunplay would be almost sacrilegious. ■ **Ryan Butt**

DEUS EX

Why we'd buy it:
• Better than on the PC
• Intelligent
• Wholly captivating

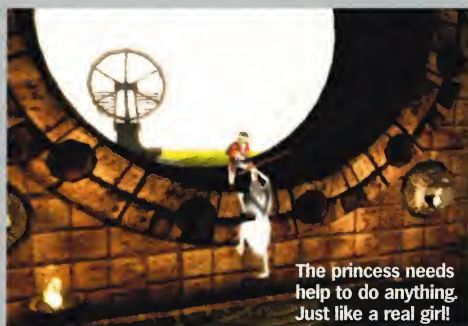
Why we'd leave it:
• No multiplayer
• Graphics are occasionally drab

09

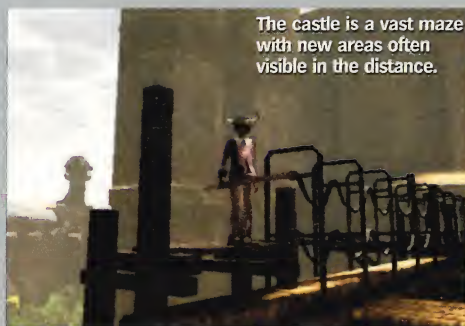
PlayStation 2 **VERDICT**

ICO

The beguiling, heart-rending tale of an ostracised boy and his spirit girl companion...



The princess needs help to do anything. Just like a real girl!



The castle is a vast maze with new areas often visible in the distance.



The infamous 'drunken disco dancing' section.

Publisher: SCEI Developer: SCEI
Price: £39.99 Players: 1

Ico is not a game that sells itself. The absolute antithesis of *Max Payne's* action overload, it's so unassuming in its approach you fear for its very survival. Yet this lack of overbearing presentation is the basis of its unique charm, combining with a wonderfully-realised gameplay concept to make one of PS2's best games so far.

Your titular hero is a young boy, ostracised from his village as a result of being born with horns. The game utterly subverts the typical reliance on flashy, high-impact FMV by opting for an eerie, scene-setting introduction that only serves to heighten the mood of disquietude. We see a party of knights sailing silently into the heart of a seemingly

abandoned island castle, and then imprisoning Ico inside a sarcophagus. To ask why would be foolish – *Ico* never reveals too much, even after the game's completion.

Impressively, there are no training modes to disrupt the atmosphere. Trial and error soon reveal Ico's few simple moves and the fact that he can climb ledges, shin up ropes and push boxes in order to make a path to the next area. An early puzzle reveals a ghostly apparition trapped in a cage. Once released, the figure is revealed to be the waif-like Princess Yorda, who you must rescue from the dank castle confines. Yorda then attaches herself to you as her protector – when you call her, she will run up and take hold of your hand; when you run she will follow; if you leave her behind, she will fall victim to the evil Shadowmen, who you have to fend off with a polinty stick. Literally.

Essentially, the castle forms a vast maze which winds its

way up and down, inside and out, with previous locations often visible from high vantage points. When you inch across a precarious ledge, the sense of vertigo is palpable. Puzzles became more complex as you are drawn deeper into the experience, but the perfectly-balanced gameplay is never threatened. As a game that taxes your brain while melting your heart, *Ico* is one of a kind. ■ **Sam Richards**

ICO

Why we'd buy it:
• Outstanding concept
• Sublime character interaction

Why we'd leave it:
• We're impatient
• Combat limited to two moves

09

PlayStation 2 **VERDICT**

DEVIL MAY CRY

You've studied the complete works of *Resident Evil*. But are you ready for Dante's inferno?

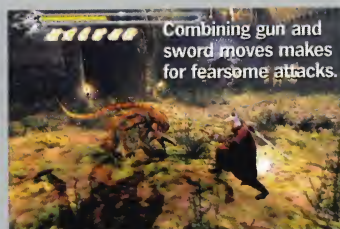


Publisher: **Capcom Eurosoft** Developer: **Capcom** Price: **£44.99** Players: **1**

It's the atmospheric location, the attention to detail in the fine, gothic architecture, that gets you first. This is swiftly followed by the intricate animation of Dante, the hero, a half-human, half-demon hard ass with platinum blonde hair and clothing straight off some avant garde Paris catwalk show. Moving away from the gradual build up play of the *Resident Evil* series, *Devil May Cry* goes straight for the jugular by ramming fistfuls of action down your throat from the minute you set foot inside the mystical castle where the events take place. Thirty minutes in and you're left wheezing, drenched in sweat with angry-looking blisters on your trigger finger.

While the plot won't win a Booker, it sets up the action nicely. An evil Demon Emperor who planned to conquer the human world was sealed in a vault by Dante's father, and has lain dormant for two millennia. But when strange demonic activity occurs on Mallet Island, it seems the dark beings are stirring again. When he hears of this, Dante heads to Mallet Island's castle to eradicate the evil once and for all.

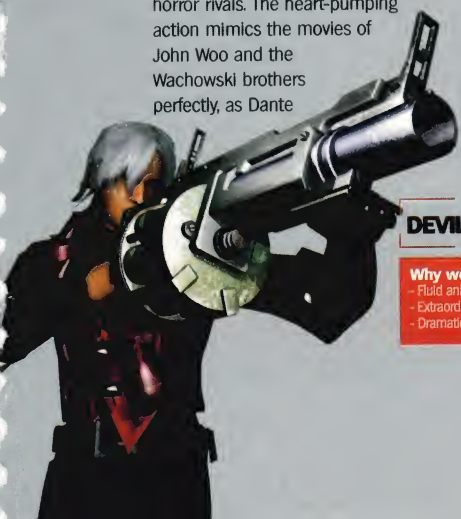
By toning down the puzzle elements and upping the body count, the game is more instantly gratifying than its survival horror rivals. The heart-pumping action mimics the movies of John Woo and the Wachowski brothers perfectly, as Dante



struts, leaps and waves his twin pistols around in his attempts to fend off demonic hordes. Combining both sword and gun attacks simultaneously, players have the freedom to string together a vast repertoire of attack combos.

As remarkable as *Devil May Cry* is, it suffers from a few flaws. Boss encounters are occasionally blighted by poor camera angles. Some might also question the game's length. It should take dedicated gamers between ten and 15 hours to complete, but bonus missions and extras will encourage many to delve back in.

These minor quibbles aside, the fluidity of combat combined with some of the most impressive visuals ever seen make this a landmark title. **■ Ryan Butt**



DEVIL MAY CRY

Why we'd buy it:
- Fluid animation
- Extraordinary visuals
- Dramatic combat

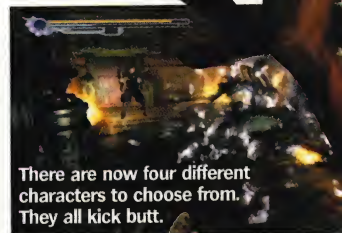
Why we'd leave it:
- A little short, perhaps
- Some dodgy camera work at key moments

09

PlayStation 2 **VERDICT**



The new range of deadly enemies includes this freakish demon marionette.



ONIMUSHA 2: SAMURAI'S DESTINY

The feudal horror epic returns with more action, more monsters, and more playable characters.

Publisher: **Capcom Eurosoft** Developer: **Capcom** Price: **£39.99** Players: **1**

Taking place several years after *Onimusha*, the hero of that game, Samanosuke, is now dead, but his nemesis, the demon lord Nobunaga Oda, remains at large. The sequel kicks off with a new protagonist, Jubei Yagyu, shortly after he finds his village burnt to the ground. Rather unsurprisingly – at least to anyone familiar with Samanosuke's story – there ensues a bloody tale of revenge, which sees our hero fulfil his epic destiny as Capcom reprises the mix of dynamic action, accomplished cut-scenes and beautiful backdrops that characterised the first in the series.

Capcom's latest historical horror masterpiece manages to strike the perfect balance between narrative and gameplay, using the gradual exposition of a spooky supernatural plot to regulate and reward an exquisite combination of elegant action and

conventional conundrums. There's also an enhanced level of tactical complexity to combat. The ability to choose several upgradeable weapons is in there – as are seals which can only be broken with a particular weapon, regulating the pace and tempo of exploration. And, once again, it's possible to discover new manoeuvres with which to dispatch an entirely fresh range of demoniacal nasties. The game also provides an intelligent variety of puzzles which are complemented by optional posers that never threaten to undermine the fast-paced rhythm established by periods of combat.

As you may have guessed, we rather like *Onimusha 2*. Despite similarities to other Capcom titles – notably the original *Onimusha* and *Devil May Cry* – it stylishly carves out its own niche. Just one question: why can't all videogame sequels be as good as this? **■ Dave McCarthy**

ONIMUSHA 2: SAMURAI'S DESTINY

Why we'd buy it:
- New graphical benchmark
- Good balance of narrative and interactivity

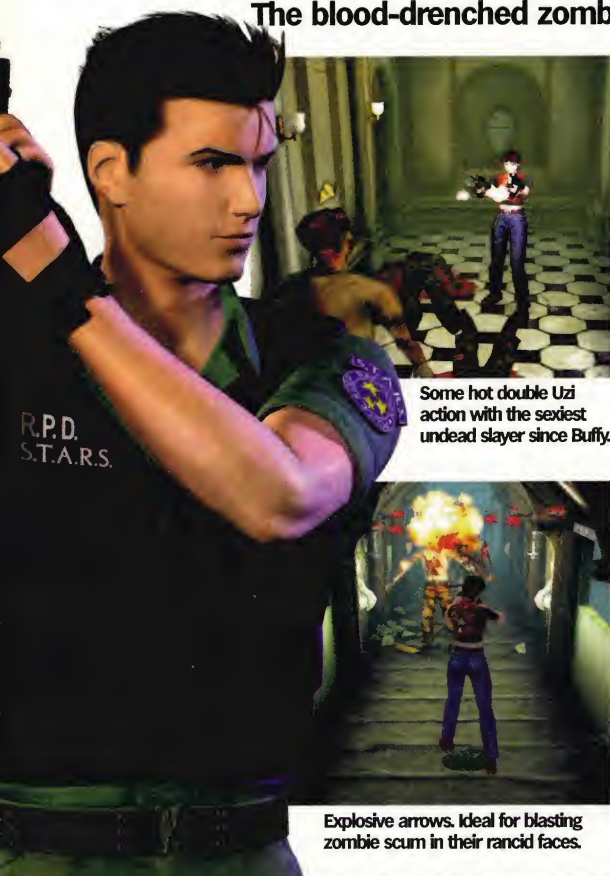
Why we'd leave it:
- Poor localisation and dodgy voice-acting

09

PlayStation 2 **VERDICT**

RESIDENT EVIL CODE: VERONICA X

The blood-drenched zombie series is back, oozing gameplay pus from every festering horror boil.



Some hot double Uzi action with the sexiest undead slayer since Buffy.



Zombies beware: Chris Redfield is back with his trusty pump action shotgun to hand.

Publisher: **Capcom Eurosoft** Developer: **Capcom**
Price: **£19.99** Players: **1**

Resident Evil Code: Veronica X represents the pinnacle in the survival horror genre. A true spine-tingling, nerve-shredding frightfest, the emphasis here is on the story; on building tension, drawing you into a chilling embrace and refusing to let you out of its clutches until your face wears a permanent expression of sheer terror.

Set shortly after the events of *Resident Evil 2*, the game once again puts you in the figure-hugging jeans of Claire Redfield, who's been captured and imprisoned on the secret island base of the Umbrella Corporation – the sinister meddlers behind the zombifying T-virus. Claire's original aim was to find her missing-in-action brother Chris (star of the original *Resi*) but now she's the one in deep trouble as she attempts to escape the monster-plagued island.

Along the way, Claire encounters help from Leonardo Di Caprio lookalike, Steve Burnside, as well as hindrance in the form of undead freaks and typical 'locate blue shield to fit into monument and unlock secret passage' style puzzles. Shocks come thick and fast thanks to a seemingly endless supply of set-pieces, some requiring a deadly trigger finger, others demanding brains rather than brawn. After spending hours escaping the island, all the previous *Resi* games would have just ended there. But not *Code: Veronica X*. Crash landing at Umbrella's Antarctic HQ, you're still only halfway through and there's plenty of exploring with Claire plus Chris Redfield's entire (significantly different) adventure to negotiate.

Putting a dampener on things is the disappointing *Resi* control system which remains clunky and ponderous. Another potential turn-off could be the fact that this is, essentially, a straight conversion of an 18-month-old Dreamcast game. Obviously, this means that if you've already completed the game on DC there's not much point updating to this version. But for everyone else, *Code: Veronica X* is a categorical must-buy. Its sinister power hasn't diminished one iota and it remains one of the finest adventure titles ever made. **Lee Hart**

RESIDENT EVIL CODE: VERONICA X

Why we'd buy it:

- Fiendish puzzles
- A thoroughly entertaining and spooky story

Why we'd leave it:

- Fiddly control system
- Loading screens
- Not optimised for PAL

09

PlayStation 2 **VERDICT**

THE THING

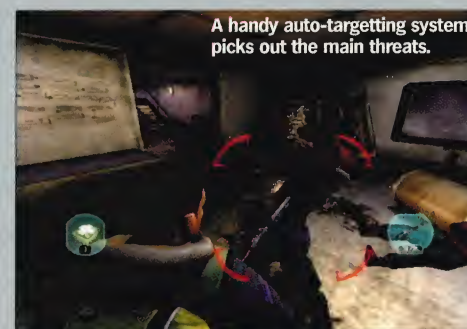
In the world of survival horror, it turns out your PS2 is the warmest place to hide...



Monsters appear to be inspired both by the movie and *Half-Life*.



The game features locations from the film and some surprise new discoveries.



A handy auto-targetting system picks out the main threats.

Publisher: **Universal Interactive** Developer: **Computer Artworks**
Price: **£39.99** Players: **1-2**

The *Thing* for PS2 picks up where John Carpenter's classic film left off. You play Captain Blake, the leader of an army expedition sent to investigate the smouldering ruins of the Arctic research base. The body of Childs (the movie's hero, played by Kurt Russell) is one of the first things you find, shortly followed by swarms of scuttling mini-Things. By the time members of your team start bursting from their clothing and developing an appetite for blood, you know there's still plenty of life left in the story.

The Thing the game follows on from the film in the same way James Cameron's *Aliens* succeeded *Alien* – opting for more thrilling action than psychological horror.

The game's much-touted innovation is the trust/fear system. The squad you command is essential to your success – when you're surrounded by Things, you'll need confident marksmen to take them down. However, soldiers who suspect you might be less than human won't respond to your commands. So you have to gain and maintain their trust. It works very well, and you'll feel real disappointment when a buddy you trusted and protected turns out to be a Thing in disguise. Micro-managing the squad, issuing weapons to the appropriate characters and using blood tests to dispel your doubts about suspect soldiers (or even yourself) provides a welcome counter-balance to the main body of the game – creeping around genuinely spooky, hostile locations, blowing away Things.

The difficulty comes mostly from the shortage of save points around the levels – especially considering the huge

number of monsters chasing you. Apart from that, and some confusingly similar icons, it's hard to find any fault with *The Thing*. The graphics are uncommonly good, it's imaginatively designed and surprisingly well scripted. Most importantly, *The Thing* fans won't be disappointed with the surprises in store. Considering the obsessive cult surrounding the movie, that's saying something. **Martin Kitts**

THE THING

Why we'd buy it:

- Loads of action
- Atmospheric locations
- Packed with monsters

Why we'd leave it:

- Confusing icons
- Not enough save points

09

PlayStation 2 **VERDICT**

THE PLAYER'S CHOICE

EXTRA THUMB

THE GAMING ADVANTAGE



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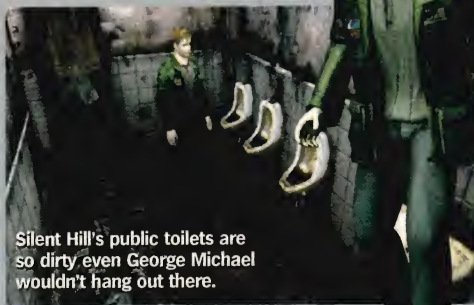
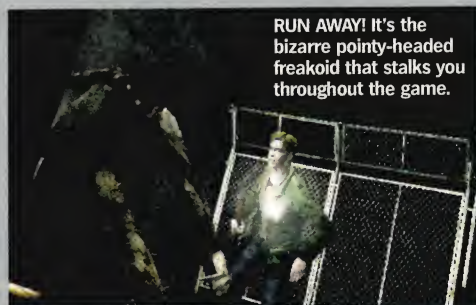
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SILENT HILL 2

The sickest town in videogames just took a turn for the worse.

Publisher: Konami Developer: Team Silent Price: £39.99 Players: 1

Konami's second *Silent Hill* shocker is more dark and sinister than *Devil May Cry*, less reliant on big shocks and big monsters than *Code: Veronica X*. Instead, you get unarmed and grief-stricken James Sanderland, searching the town for his dead wife. Part nightmare, part exploration of hopelessness and psychosis, the game is dripping in rank atmosphere. Most of the time you don't even know what you're looking for as you trudge from gloomy, dank location to gloomy, dank location carrying out surreal non-linear conversations with mentally disturbed characters.

This is a game about feeling rather than full-on action. The bloody hospital, the abandoned apartment complex, the spooky hotel (where James proposed to his wife long ago) are more rife with weird, scary noises and demented graffiti than killer creatures. Much of the gameplay is based around picking up objects, deciphering codes, solving puzzles and, as usual, unlocking new doors, but it's all done with such style

you forget how formulaic the experience really is. Plus, the puzzles are genuinely challenging at times – as long as you don't chicken out and go for Easy mode.

With a whole town to explore, dozens of freaky locations and a bizarre, terrifying boss character who follows you everywhere, *Silent Hill 2* is a beautifully made interactive horror film. Most of all, it is heartening to see that videogames don't always have to be about bland realism, constant action and happy ever afters. ■ Keith Stuart

SILENT HILL 2

Why we'd buy it:
- Intriguingly surreal story
- Significant challenge on anything but Easy mode

Why we'd leave it:
- It might scare us
- It's a slow-burner



PlayStation 2 VERDICT

ONIMUSHA: WARLORDS



Publisher: Capcom Eurosoft Developer: Capcom Price: £39.99 Players: 1

Onimusha moves away from standard survival horror with its feudal Japanese setting and combat-based gameplay. As Samanosuke, the samurai armed with a trio of magical blades, you must enter a castle overrun by demonic warriors to rescue a Princess. The environments are some of the most atmospheric on PS2 with menacingly claustrophobic alleys winding round each other. Some may miss the slow burning terror of *Resi Evil* but this game is about frantic tension as you fight for your life, moment by moment, horror by horror. ■ PF

ONIMUSHA: WARLORDS

Why we'd buy it:
- Fantastic visuals
- Fresh gameplay elements
- Great level design

Why we'd leave it:
- Short and not that scary
- Still relies on *Resi Evil* conventions



PlayStation 2 VERDICT

SHADOW OF MEMORIES



Publisher: Konami Developer: KCET Price: £39.99 Players: 1

When Elke Kusch is murdered he finds himself in a mysterious void where he's given the opportunity to go back to the mortal realm and find out who killed him – and more importantly, why. Unlike most rival horror games there are no quick fix shocks in *Shadow Of Memories*. This is a slow burner whose strength lies in its plot, but have the courage to see it through to the end and you'll be left breathless by the revelations sprung on you. Its inventiveness, sheer cunning and original slant on survival horror will leave you slack-jawed. ■ BL

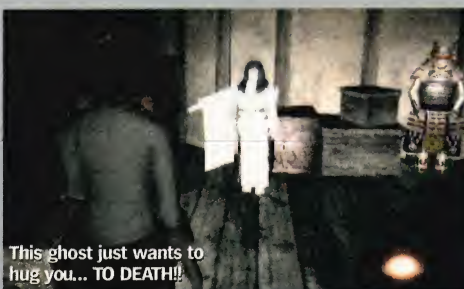
SHADOW OF MEMORIES

Why we'd buy it:
- Tremendous story line
- More twists than Chubby Checker's life story

Why we'd leave it:
- The single location gets a tad dull at times
- Puzzles too easy?



PlayStation 2 VERDICT



PROJECT ZERO

Snap the supernatural in Tecmo's photogenic shocker.

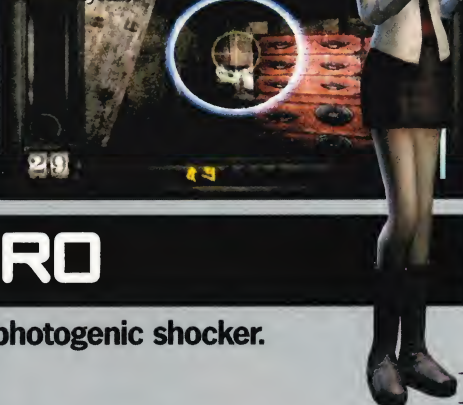
Publisher: Wanadoo Developer: Tecmo Price: £39.99 Players: 1

Like *Poltergeist*, *The Shining* and cult Japanese horror film *Ring*, *Project ZERO* manages to make ghosts truly terrifying. These are the angry spirits of people who've been subject to ritual abuse and torture. They haunt the Himuro house, a derelict, crumbling marriage of Amityville and the Bates' residence.

Mafayu, an investigative journalist, disappears while trying to discover the house's secrets. It's left to Mafayu's sister Miku to search the mansion and rescue her sibling. *Project ZERO*'s weapons arsenal consists of a camera boasting supernatural powers. It enables Miku to 'extinguish' evil ghosts who attack her. It can also reveal hidden images in doors and walls and remove talismanic powers from certain areas.

Exploring the Himuro residence is a genuinely tense and disturbing experience. It's difficult to see clearly. Miku's torch only illuminates a small area. This leads to shadows and objects taking on strange shapes that could, out of the corner of your eye, be mistaken for spectres. *Project ZERO*'s

Snap that ghostie to, erm, even more death with the unique camera combat system.



imagery is often spine-chilling. Dangling ropes, wooden dolls, ghosts with eyeless faces. Contact with spirits causes the screen to turn grainy and Miku's heart to pump, which is conveyed to the player via a now-rumbling Dual Shock. But don't think *Project ZERO* is just about shock-factor. It's also a compulsive and intriguing adventure. The only problems we had were down to inferior collision detection. And the unsettling sense of foreboding, of course. Only a videogame? Don't believe a word... ■ George Walter

PROJECT ZERO

Why we'd buy it:
- An original concept
- Genuinely scary gameplay and story

Why we'd leave it:
- Slow-paced
- Can actually become quite depressing



PlayStation 2 VERDICT

PROJECT EDEN

Publisher: **Eidos** Developer: **Core Design**
Price: **£44.99** Players: **1-4**

The makers of *Tomb Raider* blast into *Bladerunner* territory with this squad-based adventure/shooter set in a crime-ridden futuristic mega-city. You control four members of the Urban Protection Agency, each with their own unique skills: these must be used to fight battles, solve puzzles and beat the eleven vast levels. It's very slow to get going but each new level introduces you to new problems and new adversaries and it soon becomes engrossing. Sadly, the visuals look more mid-spec PC than PS2, but your mind is constantly engaged. **■ RB**

PROJECT EDEN**Why we'd buy it:**

- A well-worked and fluid game interface
- Genuinely taxing puzzles

Why we'd leave it:

- Average PC-style graphics
- Takes a while to grasp and fully appreciate

08PlayStation 2 **VERDICT**

The brilliant sniper mode enables you to zoom in for long range alien assassinations.

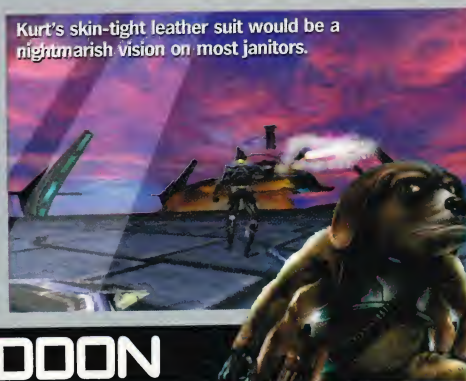
MDK2 ARMAGEDDON

Save Earth from flatulent aliens in Bioware's surreal space epic.

Publisher: **Interplay** Developer: **BioWare** Price: **£39.99** Players: **1**

With just an eccentric scientist, a brave janitor and a six-legged dog at hand, *MDK2* expects you to save the world from alien gatecrashers. The characters are playable alternately: generously-limbed hound Max can hold four weapons at once, ensuring that for his portion of the game, blasting is the order of the day. Kurt, the janitor, is most adept at stealthy adventuring, his sniper-mode enabling long range alien removal. The most inventive gaming befalls Doc Hawkins who can combine items to make bizarre new objects. For example, a hairdryer, pipes and duct tape produce a powerful leaf blower with which to waft enemies into the jaws of a gigantic venus fly trap. Obvious, really...

As you may have realised, *MDK2* doesn't take itself too seriously. Pythonesque humour is infused into each of the superb cut-scenes and the first time you fire radioactive baguettes from your atomic toaster, you'll fully appreciate what a daft game this is.



Kurt's skin-tight leather suit would be a nightmarish vision on most janitors.

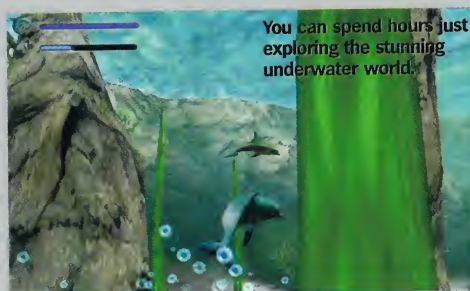
MDK2 is a great mix of cinematic production values and varied gameplay. Whatever your preference, there's something in here for you: puzzler, shooter, stealth-'em-up, it's a veritable entertainment compendium. The graphics aren't as accomplished as the gameplay; betraying the game's origins as an old Dreamcast title. Even so, the visuals have a sci-fi comic book style all of their own. And, anyway, it's refreshing to find a game that favours true originality and playability over pretty pictures. **■ Lee Hart**

MDK 2 ARMAGEDDON**Why we'd buy it:**

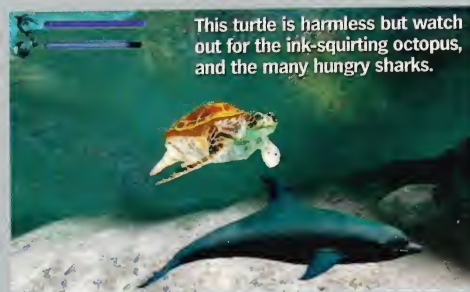
- Refreshingly offbeat
- Three character set-up
- Different gaming styles

Why we'd leave it:

- Dark and dated visuals
- No multiplayer options

08PlayStation 2 **VERDICT**

You can spend hours just exploring the stunning underwater world.



This turtle is harmless but watch out for the ink-squirting octopus, and the many hungry sharks.

ECCO THE DOLPHIN: DEFENDER OF THE FUTURE

It's not all peace, love and harmony with Sega's Ecco warrior.

Publisher: **SCEE** Developer: **Sega/Appaloosa** Price: **£39.99** Players: **1**

Only Sega could count among its key characters an environmental warrior dolphin. And if you've never encountered the bottle-nosed battler before then you've caught the boat just at the right time. The PS2 version is a visual treat. The environments are fantastically rich, ranging from warm coral reefs to ice flows, and the levels are populated by a vast array of creatures. The detail is staggering.

It's Ecco who steals the show, though. The smooth, fluid animation and intuitive control system makes handling him quite unlike any other videogame experience. This time round, the daring dolphin is striving to save the world from evil aliens The Foe. Ecco's friends are on hand to help out in the quest. In return for beating them in a challenge or aiding them in some way, you gain a gift or ability. During the opening stages you learn different songs that are used to control other fish. Learn the Fish Song, for example, and you can persuade a fluorescent species to light your way through

a series of pitch-black tunnels. Learn the Shark Song and you can stun the dolphin-eating beasts.

Ecco's aquatic wonderland is also filled with brain-melting puzzles. Appaloosa has provided cut-scenes and help icons to aid in the quest but even with these there are conundrums that will tax even the most hardened of tomb raiders. With 40 levels to swim through it'll be a while before you say so long and thanks for all the fish, but the Karmic nourishment will make it worth it, man. **■ Nick Ellis**

ECCO THE DOLPHIN: DEFENDER OF THE FUTURE**Why we'd buy it:**

- Original and refreshing concept
- Gorgeous scenery

Why we'd leave it:

- Replaying the brain-aching puzzles can become tiresome

08PlayStation 2 **VERDICT****ESCAPE FROM MONKEY ISLAND**

I... I am Jojo Jr., Monkey Prince.

Publisher: **Activision** Developer: **LucasArts**
Price: **£39.99** Players: **1**

The latest instalment of LucasArts' classic *Monkey Island* series has hero Guybrush Threepwood trying to get his lover Elaine reinstated as Governor of the eponymous Isle, so ending the rule of the evil ghost pirate Le Chuck. Gameplay in this surreal adventure involves wandering around town, meeting a bunch of bizarre characters and getting into surreal scrapes usually involving maniacal skulls and/or mischievous primates. While not as hilariously inventive as the early PC incarnations this is old skool adventuring at its most enjoyable. **■ KS**

ESCAPE FROM MONKEY ISLAND**Why we'd buy it:**

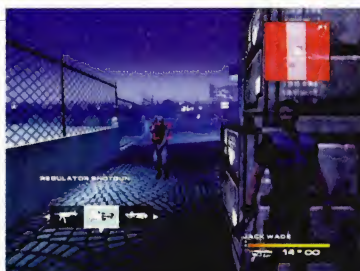
- Challenging lateral-thinking puzzles
- Monkeys

Why we'd leave it:

- The gameplay style is dated
- We are humourless

08PlayStation 2 **VERDICT**

HEADHUNTER



Publisher: **SCEE** Developer: **Amuze**
Price: **£39.99** Players: **1**

Buried in all the hype surrounding MGS2, this third-person cyberpunk adventure certainly deserves to be exhumed. You play Jack Wade a bearded bounty hunter cruising LA looking for the murderer of a prominent law enforcement agent. Missions take in sneaky stealth sections as well as all out bouts of blasting, and in the background a cool William Gibson-esque story of hi-technology unravels like a coiled python. Although at times it seems as if *Headhunter* has had its ambitions reined-in during development, it's still a diverting ride. ■ **SF**

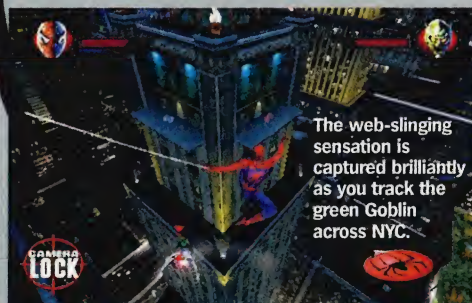
HEADHUNTER

Why we'd buy it:
- Excellent cut-scenes
- A compelling tale of the near future

Why we'd leave it:
- The missions are a little easy to complete
- Seems unfinished

07

PlayStation 2 **VERDICT**



The web-slinging sensation is captured brilliantly as you track the green Goblin across NYC.

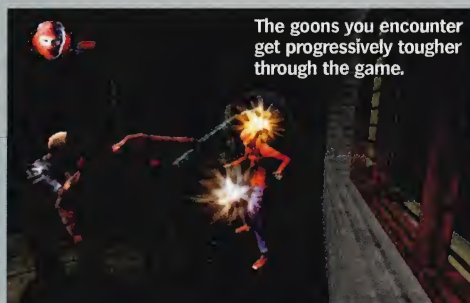
SPIDER-MAN

He catches thieves just like flies but can he win over PS2 gamers?

Publisher: **Activision** Developer: **Treyarch** Price: **£39.99** Players: **1**

If you've played any of the PSone Spidey titles, this level-based, web-slinging third-person action adventure – based around the events of the film – will feel comfortably familiar. Split into 23 stages (linked by cut-scenes) *Spider-Man* features an array of exterior and interior locations. Missions feature ground-based combat and aerial chases, stealthy infiltration and search and rescue operations.

As you'd expect, *Spider-Man* can use his webs to swing across the city (or room). In addition, webbing can tie up enemies or create a protective Web Dome. Spidey also has kick and punch moves and 21 combo attacks. It's a lot to remember but soon you'll be able to pull off dramatic High Stomps before escaping up to the ceiling. Spidey can also pick up and lob objects. With gang members attacking in big groups and a collection of supervillain boss battles that include Shocker, the Vulture, the Scorpion and the Green Goblin, you'll need all of your skills to survive later levels.



The goons you encounter get progressively tougher through the game.

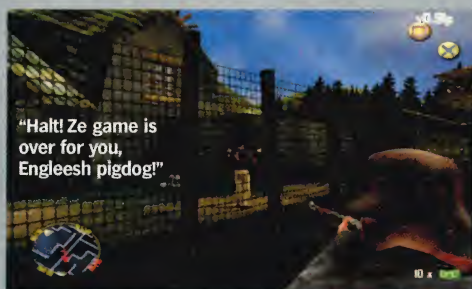
SPIDER-MAN

Why we'd buy it:
- It's fun superhero action
- Great style
- Good replay value

Why we'd leave it:
- Rigidly level-based
- Not much better than the PSone version

07

PlayStation 2 **VERDICT**



"Halt! Ze game is over for you, Engleesh pigdog!"



PRISONER OF WAR

To do list (June 1941): 1. Escape POW camp. 2. Do laundry..

Publisher: **Codemasters** Developer: **Wide Games** Price: **£34.99** Players: **1**

Prisoner Of War is essentially an interactive prison escape movie echoing with images from *The Great Escape* and *Stalag 17*. While you can shoot through the German army in *Medal Of Honor: Frontline*, in *Prisoner Of War* you have to outwit them. Here you're Captain Lewis Stone banged up, trapped behind barbed wire and watched almost 24 hours a day. Enemy soldiers outnumber prisoners. You have no weapons. Instead of fighting, this is a 3D third-person adventure game that involves sneaking around and hiding, watching and waiting. Five lengthy missions stand between you and freedom, each one with its own set of challenges and puzzles.

To play *Prisoner Of War* successfully, you need to learn how to bend the rules and to work within the camp structure. As such it's a slow-moving tactical game. There are times when the camera is slightly erratic, and some of the fixed camera angles make it difficult to see whole rooms clearly.

Also, the 'tally-ho' scripting often grates, while the realisation that the game's freeform gameplay is a well-conceived illusion comes as a disappointment.

Prisoner Of War requires stealth and endless patience, you can lose hours to it. The plot (with its animated story sections) keeps things ticking along and there's something hugely satisfying about evading guards to reach your objective. The result is a classy, innovative game, although not quite the revolution we'd hoped for. ■ **Dean Evans**

PRISONER OF WAR

Why we'd buy it:
- An original playable game
- Good 3D graphics
- Challenging stealth action

Why we'd leave it:
- Slow-paced and often frustrating

07

PlayStation 2 **VERDICT**

SOUL REAVER 2



Publisher: **Eidos Interactive** Developer: **Crystal Dynamics**
Price: **£44.99** Players: **1**

In this sequel to the hit PSone adventure you again take on the role of fallen vampire knight Raziel, reluctant pawn in the struggle between humans and bloodsuckers. The *Tomb Raider*-style puzzles are satisfyingly straightforward – hard enough to make you think, but not so tough that you can't resolve them fairly intuitively. The combat is great, pitching you into fights with knights and dimension-hopping demons. There's a lot of running to and fro across the map and the epic gothic plot gets a bit much at times but this is well-honed hokum. ■ **SF**

SOUL REAVER 2

Why we'd buy it:
- Epic, ambitious game
- Clever puzzles
- Stunning backdrops

Why we'd leave it:
- Somewhat tedious plot
- Frustratingly limited options

07

PlayStation 2 **VERDICT**

ACTION/ADVENTURE ROUND-UP

Get ready for a third-person hack-n'-slash romp through the damp dungeon of lesser PS2 action/adventures where the evil, the mediocre and the actually quite good lurk twixt lengthening shadows...



SHADOW MAN: SECOND COMING

■ Acclaim ■ £39.99 ■ 1 player
Undead superhero LeRoL returns in this dark, but unfulfilling horror ride. Lacks the polish of, say, *Devil May Cry*.
Score: 07



DRAKEN: THE ANCIENTS GATES

■ SCE ■ £39.99 ■ 1 player
Sword and sorcery malarkey with huge locations. Pity about the dodgy controls and repetitive gameplay.
Score: 07



7 BLADES

■ Konami ■ £19.99 ■ 1 player
Roaming samurai slash-'em-up with initially fun blood-letting action. Rapidly becomes dull, though, due to lack of variety and rough visuals.
Score: 05



THE MUMMY RETURNS

■ Vivendi ■ £39.99 ■ 1 player
Awkward translation of the instantly forgettable movie which manages to ignore all the 'good bits' of the cinematic version. Poor controls, too.
Score: 05



ONI

■ Rockstar ■ £39.99 ■ 1 player
Anime-inspired cyberpunk romp with purple-haired gun chick fighting shadowy crime syndicate. It's stylish and clever but lacks variety in the end.
Score: 07



EXTERMINATION

■ SCE ■ £39.99 ■ 1 player
Resident Evil meets John Carpenter's sci-fi classic *The Thing* in this decent antartic horror caper with nasty monsters and great weapons.
Score: 07



DNA

■ Virgin ■ £39.99 ■ 1 player
Cryptic cel-shaded adventure with genome research victim investigating erm, genome research. Combat is rubbish and the puzzles are silly.
Score: 05



RUNE: VIKING WARLORD

■ Take 2 ■ £39.99 ■ 1-2 players
Basic hack-'em-up gameplay (i.e. hit same button repeatedly to vanquish foes), but with vikings instead of orcs and pixies. Or zombies. Or robots.
Score: 04



BATMAN VENGEANCE

■ Ubi Soft ■ £39.99 ■ 1 player
Average outing for the Caped Crusader. All the baddies and bat gadgets are there but the combat is typically scrappy and it looks sparse.
Score: 06



EOE: EVE OF EXTINCTION

■ Eidos ■ £39.99 ■ 1 player
Futuristic adventure mixing puzzles with hand to hand combat. Unfortunately, the concoction curdles like a badly poured Irish whisky.
Score: 05



FRANK HERBERT'S DUNE

■ Cryo ■ £29.99 ■ 1 player
Like David Lynch's film this makes a confusing mess of the Frank Herbert novel. Long loading times and glitchy graphics don't help.
Score: 03



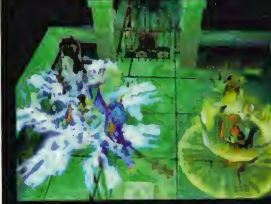
DRAGON'S LAIR II: TIMEWARP

■ Digital Leisure ■ £24.99 ■ 1 player
The 1983 LaserDisc game inexplicably converted to PS2. What was once a kind of future technology showcase is now a 22min cartoon. For £25. Avoid.
Score: 02



ALONE IN THE DARK: THE NEW NIGHTMARE

■ Infogrames ■ £44.99 ■ 1 player
The original survival horror series from the early Nineties returns, but the move from PC to PS2 hasn't been kind.
Score: 06



GAUNTLET: DARK LEGACY

■ Midway ■ £39.99 ■ 1-4 players
The classic Eighties coin-op is re-animated once again, but the awful level design and mind-numbing hack and slash gameplay soon bore.
Score: 05



THE SHADOW OF ZORRO

■ Cryo ■ £39.99 ■ 1 player
Stealthy third-person adventure based around the masked sword twirler. Sadly knackered by whirling camera and useless fighting system.
Score: 03



ATLANTIS III: THE NEW WORLD

■ Cryo ■ £39.99 ■ 1 player
Out-dated adventure puzzler in the mould of unfathomably successful PC game *Myst*. Nonsensical.
Score: 02



BLOOD OMEN 2

■ Eidos ■ £39.99 ■ 1 player
Another instalment in the 'rapidly going downhill' *Soul Reaver* saga, this time based around lead vampire Kain. Dull combat AGAIN.
Score: 05



LEGION: THE LEGEND OF EXCALIBUR

■ Midway ■ £39.99 ■ 1 player
Limited Arthurian sword and sorcery game with RPG elements but too much emphasis on tedious fighting.
Score: 05



ATLANTIS III: THE NEW WORLD

■ Cryo ■ £39.99 ■ 1 player
Out-dated adventure puzzler in the mould of unfathomably successful PC game *Myst*. Nonsensical.
Score: 02



SPACE ACE

■ Digital Leisure ■ £24.99 ■ 1 player
One last slice of putrid LaserDisc nostalgia and it's just as dated and pointless as the other two. Hopefully Digital Leisure have been imprisoned.
Score: 01

PLATFORM GAMES

Ladders, levels, hazardous precipices, cartoon characters collecting shiny objects in enormous fantasy worlds dripping with enemies and atmosphere – yup, it's the good old platforming genre.



REVIEWS

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JAK AND DAXTER: THE PRECURSOR LEGACY

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MAXIMO

FUR FIGHTERS

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GIFT

SCOOBY-DOO! NIGHT OF 100 FRIGHTS

CRASH BANDICOOT: THE WRATH OF CORTEX

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EVIL TWIN

PORTAL RUNNER

TARZAN FREERIDE

MONSTERS, INC

DISNEY'S STITCH EXPERIMENT 626

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DISNEY'S DINOSAUR

DONALD DUCK: QUACK ATTACK

CASPER: SPIRIT DIMENSIONS

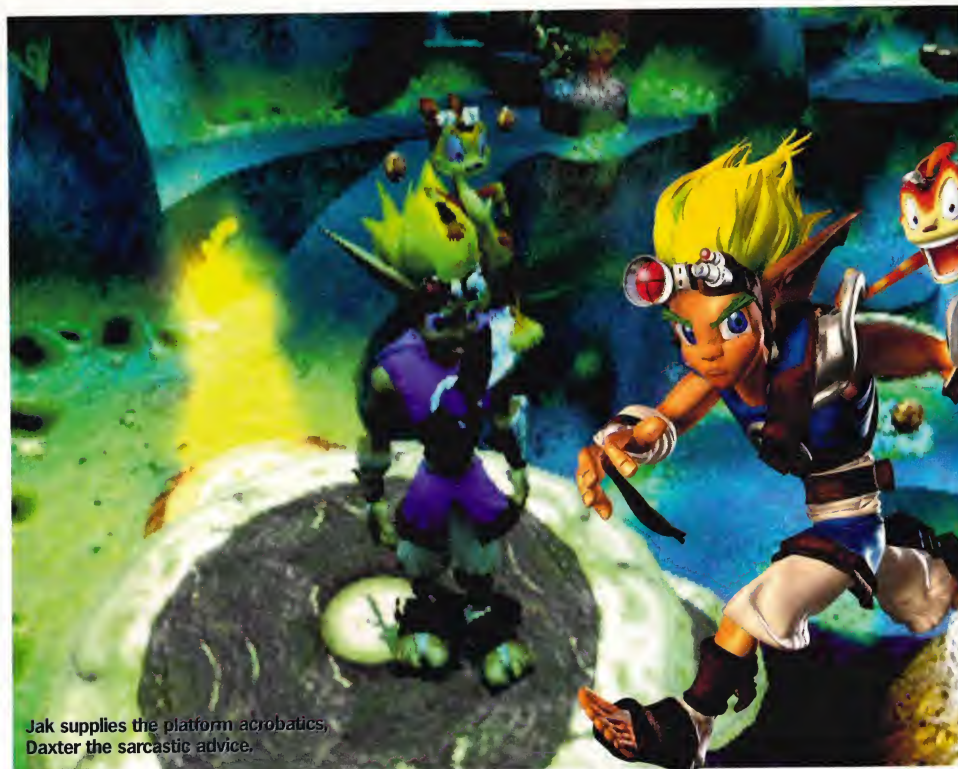
WOODY WOODPECKER: ESCAPE FROM BUZZ BUZZARD'S PARK

PETER PAN: RETURN TO NEVER LAND

FROGGER: THE GREAT QUEST

JAK AND DAXTER: THE PRECURSOR LEGACY

Crash creators Naughty Dog teach the platform game some new trick with this spectacular cartoon romp.



Jak supplies the platform acrobatics, Daxter the sarcastic advice.



Wading through the Dark Eco is a VERY BAD IDEA!

SMASH AND GRAB

Your handy guide to useful objects littering J&D's game world.



1. Precursor Orbs

These are everywhere. A good thing too because they're the currency in J&D's game world. Grease palms with Orbs and you'll get a Power Cell for your trouble.



2. Power Cells

If Precursor Orbs make people generous, Power Cells make things happen. They're not as common as Orbs, but they're great for making Z-Grav Zoomers heat resistant, levitation devices lift boulders, and all sorts of other uses.



3. Crates (Regular)

These are easily smashable and contain Green Eco. Perfect for a much-needed instant health boost.



4. Crates (Reinforced)

If you're charged with Yellow Eco, you can blow these apart. Filled with lovely Precursor Orbs.



5. Crates (Red)

These contain imprisoned, robotic 'Scout Flies'. There are seven hidden in each area. Free all of them and you earn yourself an extra Power Orb.



6. Crates (Black, Green and White)

Step away! These fragile nasties are filled with toxic gas. Get too close and you'll wish you hadn't.



It just wouldn't be a platformer without inch-perfect jump tasks.

Publisher: SCEE Developer: Naughty Dog
Price: £19.99 Players: 1

While borrowing substantially from classic platformers across the years, *Jak and Daxter: The Precursor Legacy* is far more than just an amalgam of other people's good ideas. The story is epic – so much so that this game only tells the first part of the tale – and its lead characters are loveable, but at the same time spiky as well. Its game world is entirely convincing for all its wayward wildlife and lo-fi sci-fi design. But above all, *Jak and Daxter* shows a developer at the very top of its game, displaying mastery of a genre with utterly charming results.

So it's good then. But what's it about? The titular heroes are childhood friends from a mythical land. Their humble village stands in stark contrast to the majestic ruins of a mechanically advanced race of aliens – called the Precursors – that dot the area of coastline our heroes call home. One day, disaster strikes when Daxter falls into a pool of Dark Eco – a gloopy and malignant form of their

Your initial mission, however, is less epic than saving your buddy. Boffin-babe, Keira, needs you to gather power cells to charge up her Z-Grav Zoomer hover bike's power shield. So you leave her and walk into Sandover village. There you meet a rag tag bunch of characters who all need your help and are willing to pay you in, yes, power cells. And so the game develops. As you explore the village and

its environs you gather tasks. The order you complete these depends largely on your mood and where you wander first, and as you go you gather more of the world's currency –

Precursor Orbs – that can be traded for handy power cells.

Collecting the requisite number of cells to power the hover bike's energy shield will allow you to take the Z-Grav Zoomer through a volcanic valley to the next village, more revelations and yes, more tasks and puzzles. Overall there are five village 'hubs' in the game, each boasting seven main tasks and a smattering of additional mini games.

Each unique hub covers a sprawling, free-roaming area

and, remarkably, there are no loading times. This isn't a minor point. Wedded to a genuinely intriguing plot, and a world realised with feature quality animation and a finely focused internal logic, this seamless progression from area to area provides the kind of immersive gameplay that other titles only dream of. This is a game bristling with invention, a true evolution of the platform species. ■ Paul Fitzpatrick



//J&D is a game bristling with invention, a true evolution of the platform species//

world's elemental energy – and is transformed into a loud-mouthed, sarcastic weasel-like creature. They are advised to seek out an expert on Dark Eco by the name of Gol Acheron. However, little do our duo know, Gol and his sister Maya have been twisted by their exposure to the evil gloop and, far from being in the mind to help out, they're busy hatching a plan that's going to make Daxter's plight seem like a scuffed knee.

JAK AND DAXTER: THE PRECURSOR LEGACY

Why we'd buy it:

- Visually gorgeous
- Superbly judged gameplay
- Sophisticated fun

Why we'd leave it:

- A total hatred of anything resembling a platform game

09

PlayStation 2 VERDICT

MAXIMO

Unusually cutesome platform fare from Capcom, the master of survival horror. The only horror here is the lead character's boxer shorts...



Point your chopper at the zombie and slash!



It's one hell of a big quest with monsters of all kind to slay.

Publisher: **Capcom Eurosoft** Developer: **Capcom**
Price: **£39.99** Players: **1**

Based in a classic fairytale world of kidnapped maidens and evil sorcerers, *Maximo* involves running, jumping and sword-thrusting through five themed environments, picking up gold coins (used to buy better shields and armour), collecting lost spirits (used to bargain with the Grim Reaper) and powering up your weapon with over 40 deadly improvements (used to, erm, kill things).

Gameplay hinges on two activities: exploring and slashing at baddies, the latter ranging from skeleton soldiers to ugly trolls and scary pig men. As with the like of *Zelda* and *Castlevania*, the further you get into the game, the

more attack options become available until you're unsure whether to dispatch the next bone boy with a flaming sword or your boomerang shield – a dilemma we all have to face at some point in our lives.

The armour degradation system is pretty ingenious and the source of some cutesy amusement. There are bars at the top of the screen indicating how many hits you can take before being KO'd. You can hold up to four armour segments, depending on how your power-up collecting is going, and each one can take four hits. When you're down to the last segment, the little fellow will be naked apart from a pair of heart-patterned boxer shorts. Chortle chortle.

Maximo is certainly an old-fashioned game and it will more than satisfy anyone with hankering for the 'good old days' of gaming. While it lacks the drama and 'adult'



scenarios of *Metal Gear Solid*, *Devil May Cry*, et al, it's easily accessible for gamers of all genders and ages and the difficulty curve is spot on. *Maximo* is a must-have game for any platform fan. For the rest of you out there, ditch your night-vision goggles and machine pistols and try a pair of love pants for size. They fit quite snugly. ■ **Nick Ellis**

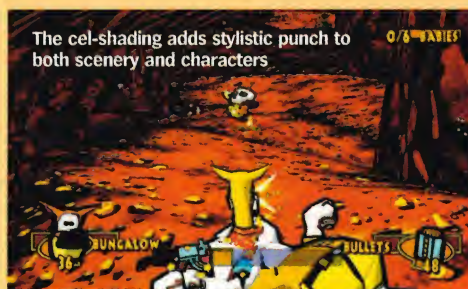
MAXIMO

Why we'd buy it:
- Beautifully designed characters
- Big, detailed environments

Why we'd leave it:
- Familiar gameplay
- Too cute for comfort, perhaps?

08

PlayStation 2 VERDICT



The cel-shading adds stylistic punch to both scenery and characters



FUR FIGHTERS

Meet the toon army. They're armed to the fangs and totally fluffed off.

Publisher: **Acclaim** Developer: **Bizarre Creations** Price: **£39.99** Players: **1-4**

Originally released on Dreamcast and PC, *Fur Fighters* arrives on PS2 as far more than just a basic conversion. A new level has been added to the main adventure; extra arenas are available in the Fluffmatch multiplayer mode; finally, and most notably, characters boast cel shading – improving the game's already impressive cartoon visuals. Aside from these tweaks it remains the same hugely playable platform romp packed with style, variety and humour.

The plot revolves around feline criminal mastermind General Viggo who has typical plans for world domination. To help achieve this, the pesky pussy diverts his arch-enemies the Fur Fighters by kidnapping their babies and hiding them around six massive game worlds. As the heroic Fighters, it's your task to rescue all your offspring before scuppering Viggo's schemes once and for all. There are six members of the furry posse each with their own unique talent – for instance, Rico the penguin can swim underwater while Tweek

the dragon glides with his fledgling wings. In the main, you're tooled-up with weaponry strafing to avoid incoming fire and blasting the fluff out of General Viggo's private army. But the gameplay is also chock-a-block with bonus games, platform antics and some brain-taxing puzzles to solve.

It's this gameplay diversity which really makes *Fur Fighters* such a refreshing title. Consistently imaginative, it's an attractive proposition for PS2 platform fans looking for something that little bit different. ■ **Lee Hart**

FUR FIGHTERS

Why we'd buy it:
- A massive, challenging and hugely varied game

Why we'd leave it:
- Occasional aimless wandering around
- No monkeys

08

PlayStation 2 VERDICT

RAYMAN REVOLUTION



Publisher: **Ubi Soft** Developer: **Ubi Soft**
Price: **£39.99** Players: **1-4**

The armless, legless, helicopter-eared Gallic hero is back for his biggest and best platform romp yet. This time around evil space pirates have invaded Rayman's planet and smashed its heart, sending the cartoon world into disharmony. And it's your job to put things right. The new, non-linear structure draws influence from *Sonic Adventure*, while RPG elements add a fresh twist to the familiar platforming frolics. Add to this the fact that there are three thoroughly addictive multiplayer mini-games to unlock and Ubi Soft has come up with a winner. ■ **AL**

RAYMAN REVOLUTION

Why we'd buy it:
- How a 3D platformer should be made
- Will keep you very busy

Why we'd leave it:
- Not particularly original
- Bloody hard!

08

PlayStation 2 VERDICT



Klonoa tries out the ill-advised extreme sport of bird surfing.

KLONOA 2: LUNATEA'S VEIL

The bizarre rabbit-eared hero returns in a stylish old skool platformer.

Publisher: **SCEE** Developer: **Namco** Price: **£39.99** Players: **1**

Those passing *Klonoa 2* over in favour of more famous PS2 platformers are definitely missing out. From legendary developer Namco, this slice of retro goodness plays like a classic from the 16-bit days but cleverly exploits PS2's capabilities to make the whole experience as contemporary as manipulative pop audition programmes.

In a stereotypical platformer plot, the heroic Klonoa must restore peace to the beautiful land of Lunatea by recovering four 'Harmony Bells' that have been nicked by an evil pirate. To do this, he has to capture various creatures he encounters using a magic ring and manipulate them in certain ways to get past the game's obstacles. For example, some creatures help Klonoa fly while others need to be tastefully colour coordinated with obstructions to progress. Around this simple premise Namco has created a wonderful platformer that constantly surprises with its ingenuity. A gentle learning curve means that puzzles are never beyond your grasp while still

making you work, and the clever use of enemies and varied environments help make *Klonoa 2* a pleasure to play.

While its gameplay is closer to the linear antics of old-timer *Crash Bandicoot* than the likes of free-roaming newcomer *Jak & Daxter*, *Klonoa 2* is still a beautifully crafted adventure. Throughout its lovingly detailed cartoon levels (making use of the currently in-vogue cel-shading technique) Namco reminds us that retro can still be cool. Unless it involves Abba. ■ **Adrian Lawton**

KLONOA 2: LUNATEA'S VEIL

Why we'd buy it:
- Cunning and addictive gameplay
- Beautiful visuals

Why we'd leave it:
- Linear structure may not appeal to some
- Almost too cute

08

PlayStation 2 **VERDICT**

GIFT



Publisher: **Cryo** Developer: **Ecosystem**
Price: **£39.99** Players: **1**

In the fine tradition of mad French videogames, your main character in this barmy platformer is a mischievous cocktail barman called Gift. This Ren & Stimpy reject gets sucked into a playing a game (within your game) and does battle through seven worlds to rescue the lovely Lolita Globo. The worlds are all parodies of famous films ruled by gnomes who embody the seven deadly sins. Much of the action is so difficult that death comes too often. There's ingenuity here but gameplay isn't well crafted enough and the lead character isn't very likeable either. ■ **SF**

GIFT

Why we'd buy it:
- Interesting weapons
- Innovative characters
- Ridiculous imagination

Why we'd leave it:
- Frustrating
- Stupid main character
- Ludicrous plot

06

PlayStation 2 **VERDICT**

SCOOBY-DOO! NIGHT OF 100 FRIGHTS



Publisher: **THQ** Developer: **Heavy Iron**
Price: **£29.99** Players: **1**

So the gang find themselves lured to a mysterious mansion to investigate the disappearance of some brainiac inventor. This makes for fairly routine platform action, with players controlling Scooby as he collects snacks and dispatches enemies using either a bounce or a dash attack. The 12 levels are all faithful to the cartoon, with haunted houses, swirling leaves and drifting fog. Hardcore platforming fans will crave more variation and depth but *100 Frights* is surprisingly entertaining, offering uncomplicated fun for kids and retro TV buffs alike. ■ **TC**

SCOOBY-DOO! NIGHT OF 100 FRIGHTS

Why we'd buy it:
- Wave silly for platform games
- Unexpectedly playable

Why we'd leave it:
- Questionable longevity
- Jak And Daxter is a league above this

06

PlayStation 2 **VERDICT**

In a breathtakingly innovative new gameplay twist, Crash collects some apples!



CRASH BANDICOOT: THE WRATH OF CORTEX

Is this platform perfection or just another shameless Crash-in?

Publisher: **Vivendi Universal** Developer: **Traveller's Tales** Price: **£39.99** Players: **1**

This latest instalment of the *Bandicoot* saga has to be seen more as a cheeky megamix of what's gone on before than a whole new adventure in its own right. Many of the levels look and feel exactly like the ones in *Crash 3: Warped*, albeit finely polished thanks to the sharp upgrade in processing power. The layout is also identical – with Crash traversing pseudo 3D levels in search of crystals, gems and relics needed to beat the game with that perfect completion rating. The only new stuff comes in the form of a few vehicles and little sister Coco as a playable character – although only on certain levels.

All this gives *Wrath Of Cortex* a dated feel that may turn devotees off well before Crash's beardy nemesis has been thwarted in his latest venture to take over the world. To make matters worse, we have to endure some savage loading times between levels. What this game needed was a fresh moves list, some new themed levels and perhaps some interesting



sub-games incorporating the kind of multiplayer action seen in spin-off titles *Crash Team Racing* and *Crash Bash*.

The classic *Crash* gamplay is still good enough to please fans – and as long as you're not expecting a great leap forward in quality, there's no doubting this is an enjoyable game. It's just a pity new developer Traveller's Tales hasn't shown the same kind of ambition *Crash* creator Naughty Dog has displayed in moving the platform adventure forwards with *Jak and Daxter*. ■ **Ryan Butt**

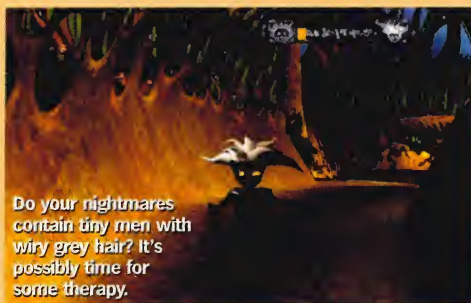
CRASH BANDICOOT: THE WRATH OF CORTEX

Why we'd buy it:
- Instantly accessible to fans and newcomers alike
- It looks absolutely lush

Why we'd leave it:
- Knackered by over-long loading times
- Devoid of new ideas

06

PlayStation 2 **VERDICT**



Do your nightmares contain tiny men with wiry grey hair? It's possibly time for some therapy.



Heavily plot-based, cut-scenes regularly crop up to expand the story.

EVIL TWIN: CYPRIEN'S CHRONICLES

Prepare to enter the twisted mind of a ten-year-old child...

Publisher: Ubi Soft Developer: In-Utero Price: £34.99 Players: 1

If the darkest artistic minds came together to create a platformer, it would be something like *Evil Twin*. The game's plot (a young orphan gets sucked into his own nightmarish imagination) could be right out of one of Clive Barker's horror novels; while the twisted, hellish landscapes have a mutated appeal that HR Giger might be proud of. Then there's the David Lynch influence... See, the first character you meet is an emaciated, talking elephant called Wilbur.

Beneath this unpleasant veneer rots the carcass of a traditional platform game. Jump, kill bad guys, collect sparklike objects. You control Cyprien, a ten-year-old Chucky lookalike who faces a journey through 76 levels of his own diseased imagination hoping to rescue his trapped friends, find four parts of a missing key, infiltrate a dark tower, and do battle with a bad guy known as the Master.

As Cyprien, you can run, jump and climb around the platform-based landscapes, dispatching enemies with an

auto-aiming slingshot or a butt-bounce. Collecting energy bonuses, meanwhile, powers a bar in the top-right corner of the screen. This allows Cyprien to become his heroic alter ego Super Cyprien, who can throw fireballs and cast crackling bolts of electricity.

This dual personality aspect is what makes *Evil Twin* interesting. But 'interesting' isn't always 'enjoyable'. No, this is challenging, yet unengaging stuff. As with all nightmares you won't regret it when you wake up. ■ Dean Evans

EVIL TWIN: CYPRIEN'S CHRONICLES

Why we'd buy it:
- Inventive level design
- Dual personality gameplay

Why we'd leave it:
- Poor depth perception
- Imperfect animation
- Frustrating game camera



PlayStation 2 VERDICT

PORTAL RUNNER



Publisher: 3DO Developer: 3DO
Price: £39.99 Players: 1

3DO has chosen to follow its stable of *Army Men* games with this, the adventures of Vikki G and her lion sidekick Leo, who lets her sit on his back and attacks baddies on her command. Action is of the running, jumping, puzzle-solving, crystal-collecting and arrow-shooting variety. There are five big worlds to explore, but the game has precious little atmosphere and puzzles are too straightforward. This is much better than the *Army Men* series, but that's like saying that dying from malaria is slightly less unpleasant than succumbing to Ebola. ■ IW

PORTAL RUNNER

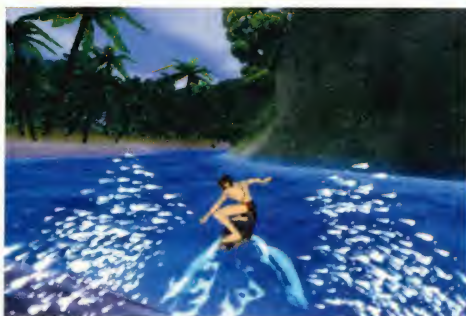
Why we'd buy it:
- We love green hair
- We have shares in 3DO

Why we'd leave it:
- There are far better platform adventures out there



PlayStation 2 VERDICT

TARZAN FREERIDE



Publisher: Ubi Soft Developer: Disney Interactive
Price: £35.99 Players: 1

Those surfing bits in Disney's *Tarzan* were destined to find their way into a videogame, and here they are in this quirky mix of third-person platforming and 'extreme sports' elements. In the main, you jump from platform to platform, collecting objects. However, this is mixed in with tree-surfing and bonus stages where you water-ski and bungee jump. *Tarzan Freeride* does a good job of replicating the movie's 'Deep Canvas' technique (i.e. 3D-style backgrounds), but the gameplay is as hollow as the tree trunks you occasionally do tricks through. ■ PR

TARZAN FREERIDE

Why we'd buy it:
- To extend the enjoyment of the film
- Because it's Disney!

Why we'd leave it:
- Not up to PS2 standard at all
- Because it's Disney!



PlayStation 2 VERDICT

MONSTERS, INC.



Publisher: SCEE Developer: Disney Interactive
Price: £39.99 Players: 1

Based on the latest Disney/Pixar cinematic effort, *Monsters, Inc.* let's you control either of the film's loveable main protagonists, Sulley or Mike. Each monster has its own strengths and weaknesses and your goal is to progress through the Monster Academy by gaining experience in the art of scaring kids. You do this by hammering the symbol buttons and unleashing a rip-roaring scare combo, which provides some laugh-out-loud moments. Apart from this lonely highlight, the game is dreadfully standard platform fodder. ■ RB

MONSTERS, INC.

Why we'd buy it:
- Based on an ace movie
- Appealing for kiddies

Why we'd leave it:
- Looks and feels awful
- Boring and repetitive
- Not a patch on J&D



PlayStation 2 VERDICT

DISNEY'S STITCH: EXPERIMENT 626



Publisher: SCEE Developer: Disney Interactive
Price: £39.99 Players: 1

Stitch is an ill-tempered, six-armed alien experiment created with the sole intention of causing havoc. In *Lilo & Stitch* the pint-sized pain in the ass is soothed by a cute Hawaiian moppet, but *Experiment 626* gives Stitch free reign. So you slaver and snarl through six themed worlds, vapourising everything in sight with laser guns to collect DNA samples for your mad scientist creator. This would be fun if it weren't for a game camera that continually gets in the way ruining the experience. Maybe Stitch sabotaged the code... ■ PF

DISNEY'S STITCH: EXPERIMENT 626

Why we'd buy it:
- Good ideas and Stitch has a filthy laugh.

Why we'd leave it:
- The camera has severe orientation issues.



PlayStation 2 VERDICT

DISNEY'S DINOSAUR



Publisher: **Ubi Soft** Developer: **Ubi Soft**
Price: **£39.99** Players: **1-2**

A curious mix of adventure and puzzle game where you control three of the movie's characters – Aladar the dinosaur, Zini the monkey and Fila the bird – as they move through their meteorite-torn homeland (viewed through some prehistoric hellicam that makes the fancy 3D dinosaurs look like ragged cardboard). Unresponsive controls and invisible barriers make picking up items and moving around a nightmare. This is a game that believes manoeuvrability shouldn't get in the way of a nice piece of animation. How wrong it is. ■ **MG**

DISNEY'S DINOSAUR

Why we'd buy it:
- Multi-character idea
- Pretty clips from movie
- You like dinosaurs?

Why we'd leave it:
- Fiddly controls
- Sparse, ugly maps
- Insultingly linear puzzles

04

PlayStation 2 **VERDICT**

DONALD DUCK: QUACK ATTACK



Publisher: **Ubi Soft** Developer: **Disney Interactive**
Price: **£39.99** Players: **1**

Charged with rescuing Daisy from the clutches of evil magician Merlock, our meteorological mallard must recover weather vanes from each tedious-filled level in his valiant rescue attempt. How this is supposed to actually aid Daisy remains a mystery. The game is a 3D platformer and each of the four worlds follows the same pattern – quickly falling into the category of being too tricky for the bairns, yet too basic for the more seasoned gamer. A patient player will have all 24 levels licked in an afternoon. ■ **RM**

DONALD DUCK: QUACK ATTACK

Why we'd buy it:
- Impressive DVD intro
- Unique Boss battles
- You like Donald Duck?

Why we'd leave it:
- Tedious gameplay
- Outdated concept

04

PlayStation 2 **VERDICT**

CASPER: SPIRIT DIMENSIONS



Publisher: **TDK** Developer: **Lucky Chicken**
Price: **£29.99** Players: **1**

TDK has a five-year deal to make games based on Casper and this is the second effort. This time, he's called upon to free the spirit dimensions from Kibosh, an evil spectre. The quest consists of several jewel-littered levels, patrolled by Kibosh minions. Because Casper can float, you don't get the usual platform elements. Instead, you can fly around, picking up jewels, firing spirit blasts and even phasing through gratings. With half-decent graphics, four giant worlds and hundreds of enemies, this isn't the total kiddie nightmare it could have been. ■ **DE**

CASPER: SPIRIT DIMENSIONS

Why we'd buy it:
- The flying can be quite fun

Why we'd leave it:
- Simplistic gameplay, dumbed-down shooting

04

PlayStation 2 **VERDICT**

WOODY WOODPECKER: ESCAPE FROM BUZZ BUZZARD'S PARK



Publisher: **Cryo** Developer: **Ekosystem.com**
Price: **£29.99** Players: **1**

The zaniest woodpecker on the planet is back in his very own crazy platform game! Thus reads the blurb on the back of the game box – and with 'zany', 'crazy' and 'platform' in the same sentence, surely this is warning enough for any discerning punter that this game is going to be as enjoyable as having your spleen ripped out with a claw hammer. There are some nice touches, such as the use of Woody's beak-peck to climb up wooden pillars in rat-a-tat-at fashion, but mostly its repetitive and sparkingly unoriginal. Buy Jak And Daxter instead. ■ **NE**

WOODY WOODPECKER: ESCAPE FROM BUZZ BUZZARD'S PARK

Why we'd buy it:
- We'd been in the Woody Woodpecker fanclub since the age of four

Why we'd leave it:
- To avoid the uninspiring, unoriginal and downright frustrating gameplay

03

PlayStation 2 **VERDICT**

PETER PAN: RETURN TO NEVER LAND



Publisher: **SCEE** Developer: **Disney Interactive**
Price: **£39.99** Players: **1**

Here we find the titular 'Boy Who Never Stopped Wearing Tights' attempting to foil more of Captain Hook's diabolical nonsense. Anyone who's ever played a Crash Bandicoot game will be right at home with the jungle setting and third-person, linear, platformer-ish levels. Replace Crash's wompa fruit with glowing orbs, and you have Return To Never Land. It is, of course, rubbish. The level designs are re-used ad infinitum. The graphics glitch, the controls judder. The gameplay is tiresomely repetitive. Return To Never Land? Never never. ■ **PR**

PETER PAN: RETURN TO NEVER LAND

Why we'd buy it:
- The movie clips are almost bearable

Why we'd leave it:
- Immensely boring
- MG2 costs £40, too...

02

PlayStation 2 **VERDICT**

FROGGER: THE GREAT QUEST



Publisher: **Konami** Developer: **KCEA**
Price: **£39.99** Players: **1**

Bearing little resemblance to the Eighties arcade classic, this rendition of Frogger has 'our hero' heading off to find a Princess who will transform him into a handsome Prince with a snog. The graphics are offensive, the gameplay is lighter than helium and the jerky update is so bad it's almost funny. Just 17 stages of brain-scrambling dullness stand between you and Frogger's destiny, although it's unlikely anyone will make it that far. Obviously Frogger is aimed at younger gamers but at that price they'd have to be stupid as well. ■ **DM**

FROGGER: THE GREAT QUEST

Why we'd buy it:
- We're collecting items for Room 101

Why we'd leave it:
- It's rubbish in every way

02

PlayStation 2 **VERDICT**

ROLE-PLAYING GAMES

Orcs, pixies, armour points, spectacular magic battles, townsfolk who only ever stand in one place and don't mind you wandering into their homes and going through their draws. It can only be the RPG.

REVIEWS

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EVERBLUE
HEROES OF MIGHT AND MAGIC
WARRIORS OF MIGHT AND MAGIC
KING'S FIELD: THE ANCIENT CITY
EVERGRACE

FINAL FANTASY X

Boy with murky past fights turn-based battles to save the world from a giant whale. Game on...



There are six characters to recruit as you go along, all with their own unique battle skills.



Characters have an 'Overdrive' bar which is charged up during battle and used to launch huge special attacks.

Publisher: **SCEE** Developer: **Square**
Price: **£39.99** Players: **1**

Like its predecessors, *FFX* relies on familiar foundations – a world threatened by evil, a troubled hero with a mysterious past, traditional weapons and spiritual magic. On top of these supporting struts, Square adds its famous turn-based battle sequences with elemental magic throwing and titan-summoning, customisable weapons and character stat management, not to mention potions, Chocobos and personal airships. The whole thing is then draped with mournful piano solos, gorgeous cut-scenes and novel-sized chunks of dialogue. A *Final Fantasy* game is always going to be big. But the first *Final Fantasy* game on PS2 is bigger than most.

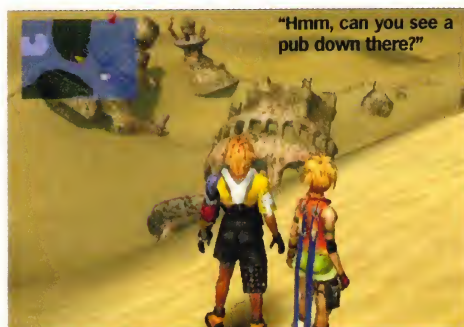
FFX is also visually stunning. Just as *FFVII* pushed the power of PSone, *FFX* takes full advantage of the PS2's next-gen innards. One gorgeous cut-scene after another blends seamlessly into bouts of hi-res 3D adventuring. From a sun-drenched island to a ruined undersea city, you guide a magnificent fantasy seven on an epic quest rendered in extraordinary detail. In fact, with its complex plot and cinematic presentation, *FFX* turns the humble RPG into a

captivating, often mesmerising interactive movie.

As usual, Square has kept the core RPG-ing very recognisable – you'll explore large, scrolling locations, pick up potions, chit-chat to the locals and fight random battles against nightmarish 'fiends'. The game begins in the futuristic city of Zanarkand, a magnificent megalopolis of bulbous skyscrapers and aerial roadways. It's here that you meet Tidus, *FFX*'s pretty-boy hero and star Blitzball player – a form of submerged water polo played with the brutality of ice hockey. Disaster suddenly befalls Zanarkand. A giant demon whale appears, shedding demonic scales that

become murderous minions. After a few simple, turn-based battles, a large whirlpool appears in the sky. The city gets spectacularly destroyed and Tidus is catapulted 1,000 years into the future.

When he eventually awakes, our hero finds himself in a strange new world called Spira. It's just the start of a lengthy tale of twists and counter-twists, of danger and romance, of technology and, of course, spirit. Can Tidus find his way back to his own world? Can the whale demon (known as Sin) be defeated? It's the start of a gigantically-proportioned adventure.



The astonishingly-detailed visuals are some of the best yet seen on PS2.

BONUS EXTRAS

If there wasn't already enough to do in *FFX* (collect all of the Aeons, defeat Sin, gain the Ultimate Weapons), Square has also included a series of sub-games (or quests) that allow you to take a breather from saving the world.



1 Blitzball

Both Tidus and Wakka are Blitzball players and you get a chance to play this underwater sport early in the game. Progress further and you have the chance to compete in an entire Blitzball league, recruiting players from across the world to replace your team of no-hopers.



2 Chocobo Racing

What would an FF game be without the diversion of racing Chocobos. Once you've passed three simple training tests and then found the hidden racetrack, you can compete on these giant (almost flightless) birds for glory and wonderful prizes.



3 Monster Arena

When you first visit the Monster Arena, you'll see it's certainly an 'arena' but there are no monsters in it. Agree to the challenge and you can search the large and dangerous Calm Lands capturing monsters (with special 'Capture' weapons) to fill the arena.



// Even when you've been playing for hours on end you find new things to learn and do //

The battle sequences in *FFX* are much like those in any previous FF game. The world of Spira is infested with fiends, demonic spirits that prey on the living. These creatures all have their own attacks and abilities, and range in size and difficulty. To fight, the combatants face each other in a turn-based 3D melee. You make a move and then the enemy makes its move. This gets repeated until one side has been killed.

Destroying fiends and the large, HP-stacked bosses that are spread throughout the game earns your characters both cash (Gil) and Ability Points (AP). The money can be spent on new weapons and extra curative items for your adventurers. Ability Points, meanwhile, are essentially experience points and these can be used to improve a character's attributes and skills. New to the *FFX* combat

system is a bar that shows the order of battle, allowing you to see when the enemy will attack and plan your attacks/defenses accordingly.

Once the narrative loosens its linear grip, you can spend time finding each character's Ultimate Weapon, searching for the game's secrets and so on. Veteran FF players will probably want to enjoy some time fighting random battles, earning AP to improve the abilities of their characters before they face the final battle with Sin. You can get the bare minimum of gameplay out of *FFX* or spend months on it, finding every last item. And even when you've been playing for hours on end, you find that there are still new things to learn and do.

Final Fantasy X is certainly improved, but it's not all new. It's more of a *Pro Evolution FF* – much like its predecessors in terms of basic structure and gameplay, but built to take advantage of the PS2's mightiness. What stands out above all else is the graphics. Some of the cut-

scenes are truly stunning, real stop-and-stare moments with excellent attention to detail, fantastic colours and cinematic styling. The downside to lauding *FFX* as an interactive movie is that you often end up watching the game more than actually playing it.

What's impressive about *FFX* is that it feels huge. In fact, you can play for more than 30 hours and not even reach a point where you can customise your weapons or race Chocobos. Ultimately, *FFX* is challenging and captivating – an epic fantasy story welded to the chassis of a traditional stat-and-hack RPG. Astonishing? Not quite. But it has its moments. ■ **Dean Evans**

FINAL FANTASY X

Why we'd buy it:

- It's by far the best RPG on PS2
- Incredible depth

Why we'd leave it:

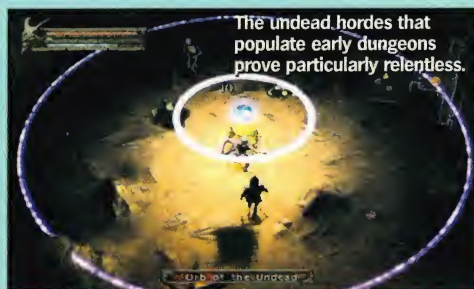
- It's almost entirely linear
- Only a slight evolution of the FF genre

08

PlayStation 2 VERDICT



Unleashing magic attacks results in some glorious visual pyrotechnics.



The undead hordes that populate early dungeons prove particularly relentless.

BALDUR'S GATE: DARK ALLIANCE

It's back to RPG basics with this AD&D-themed hack and slasher.

Publisher: **Interplay** Developer: **Black Isle Studios** Price: **£39.99** Players: **1-2**

Based in the hugely popular (at least with role playing spods) *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons* Forgotten Realms universe, *Dark Alliance* requires you to choose from three differently skilled adventurers and then battle through a series of beautifully detailed locations (picking up potions and equipment en route) while slaying a myriad of evil Tolkien-esque monsters.

This being an American rather than Japanese role-player, combat is fast, violent and real-time (operated with just two buttons – attack and parry), rather than turn-based and chess-like in its complexity. Although far more action-oriented than any of the PC *Baldur's Gate* titles, there's still plenty of tactical play involved in your use of items and power-ups, as well as the selection of a character – pick Vahn the Archer and you'll become deadly from long range, opt for Elven Sorceress Adrianna to wield some serious magical power. Then there's Kromlech the dwarf who's good with a sword.

Essentially, though, *Dark Alliance* is a thrilling take on the isometric battling madness found in the ye olde classic *Gauntlet*. Except in 3D. There's barely a pause for breath between slaying dragons and stopping giant spiders with a well-cast spell, and while you're hacking and spelling away, you get to appreciate the gorgeous shadow and shimmering torchlight effects. As an ideal mixture of action conventions and scaled down RPG bits and pieces, *Dark Alliance* is a great achievement. ■ **Keith Stuart**

BALDUR'S GATE: DARK ALLIANCE

Why we'd buy it:

- Hours of deep play
- It's based on Dungeons & Dragons

Why we'd leave it:

- Gameplay gets repetitive
- It's based on Dungeons & Dragons

08

PlayStation 2 VERDICT

SUMMONER



Publisher: **THQ** Developer: **Volition**
Price: **£39.99** Players: **1** Out: **Now**

Suddenly, and without warning, a village is attacked. Cursed with the mark of the Summoner, a young boy named Joseph uses his powers to summon demons and fight back. But when the demons turn on the people and raze them to the ground, Joseph must depart on an epic journey to find four summoning rings and bring the tyranny to an end. Characterisation is sublime, the plot is engrossing and the turn-based combat works superbly. Although still bound by certain RPG confines, *Summoner* surpasses most of its contemporaries. ■ **BL**

SUMMONER

Why we'd buy it:

- Deep gameplay
- Limitless spells
- Beautifully scripted

Why we'd leave it:

- Too ugly
- Pop-up way too severe in places

08

PlayStation 2 VERDICT



Hmm, it looks pretty enough but is that windmill in the right place?!

DARK CLOUD

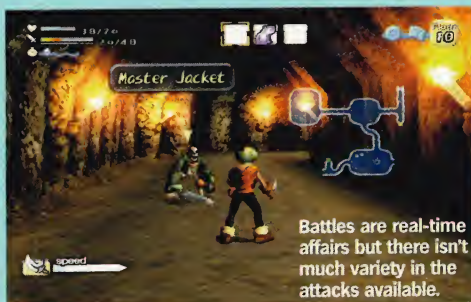
Role-playing and town planning combine in this adventure curio.

Publisher: SCEE Developer: Level 5 Price: £39.99 Players: 1

The world of *Dark Cloud* has been ravaged by a porky purple genie. Luckily the inhabitants have made like Bin Laden and hidden away in various dungeons. It's your job to battle through these dungeons, retrieving the townsfolk along with their houses, trees and rivers. Oh, and then you have to re-assemble it all. Yes, you did read that correctly. *Dark Cloud* is both a traditional RPG and, bizarrely, a town planning tool.

However, this isn't simply a case of slapping down buildings willy-nilly. No, you've got to listen to the rescued villagers and make sure that, for instance, the old hag who wants to live next to Dran's windmill does so. Only when everybody's happy with their 'new' town will you be successful. Similarly, weapons require constant upkeep. Use them too much and they'll break – which means that you'll have to constantly repair them as you go along.

At certain points in the game other characters will join your quest. However, you can only play as one character at a



Battles are real-time affairs but there isn't much variety in the attacks available.

time, which invariably means endless swapping back-and-forth between protagonists to exploit their individual skills.

Dark Cloud isn't without its failings. The dungeons, each consisting of fifteen floors, are in some cases simply too big and often detract from the otherwise fascinating dual nature of the game. Also, the constant maintenance of characters, weapons and the copious menu-flipping can prove somewhat tiresome at times. But this is unquestionably an original new challenge for RPG fans. ■ **Jes Bickham**

DARK CLOUD

Why we'd buy it:

- Looks great
- Mixes RPGs with god games to good effect

Why we'd leave it:

- Highly repetitive and overlong
- Too much maintenance

07

PlayStation 2 **VERDICT**

EPHEMERAL FANTASIA



Publisher: Konami Developer: KCEJ
Price: £39.99 Players: 1

Konami breaks new ground with the world's first Rhythm Action RPG. You play Mouse, a guitar player, songwriter and thief. You're invited to a small island to compose a wedding ballad for ruler Xelpherpolis and his bride, and end up investigating an evil curse on the people. At various points you must whip out your guitar and follow screen prompts to make tear-jerking ballads. The script is bawdy, the characters are downbeats and the plot is genuinely intriguing. When was the last time you played a sea shanty to a pub full of drunken sailors? ■ **KS**

EPHEMERAL FANTASIA

Why we'd buy it:

- Interesting story
- Funny characters
- Play guitar!

Why we'd leave it:

- Samey monsters
- Perplexing puzzles
- Requires patience

07

PlayStation 2 **VERDICT**

SHADOW HEARTS



Publisher: Midway Developer: Sacnoth
Price: £39.99 Players: 1

From the random turn-based battles to the detailed pre-rendered backgrounds and occasional mini-games, this game's similarities to *Final Fantasy* are obvious. But differences? There are a few. After struggling through *FFVIII* and enduring the syrupy sweetness of *FFIX*, it's pleasing to play an RPG that's neither too cartoon-like or bogged down by a complicated control system. Adding skills, objects and specialities to characters is simplicity itself, and a detailed series of help menus make life even easier. An enjoyable RPG that deserves attention. ■ **DM**

SHADOW HEARTS

Why we'd buy it:

- Uncomplicated and enjoyable RPG
- Interesting story line

Why we'd leave it:

- Does little to push the boundaries

07

PlayStation 2 **VERDICT**



JADE COCOON 2

Not only do you have to catch 'em all, you have to breed 'em all too.

Publisher: Ubi Soft Developer: Genki Price: £34.99 Players: 1-2

With over a hundred monsters to gene-splice, the original *Jade Cocoon* mixed old-fashioned RPG basics with Dr Moreau-style animal experiments. Admittedly, it groaned under the weight of genre clichés – turn-based combat, fairy tale world threatened with evil, over-abundant speech-bubble chit-chat. But the game cleverly blended its save-the-world adventure story with an adult version of *Pokémon*. Not only could you fight the monsters you encountered, you could capture them, train them and merge them to create new, more powerful super-monsters.

Jade Cocoon 2 is no different. Taking control of young lad Kahu, you must fight through four Elemental forests in search of four magical orbs. Each forest consists of a number of different stages, culminating in a boss encounter. Instead of a sword, Kahu possesses a BeastAmulet, a chunky wristband that allows him to store and control creatures (called Divine Beasts) to do the fighting for him. These Divine Beasts all



Combat is strictly turn-based and, as you can see, there are plenty of flash magic attacks.

have their own elemental abilities – fiery explosions, defensive walls, sleep spells, healing auras and so on. The resulting combat may be politely turn-based, but it's also jazzed up with *FF*-style battle magic.

Despite repetitive gameplay, there's much to keep you going. A creature-breeding element extends the appeal, while an unfolding narrative weaves together the regular combat encounters. Good-looking, dizzyingly large and strangely enthralling. ■ **Dean Evans**

JADE COCOON 2

Why we'd buy it:

- Intriguing monster-breeding element
- Well-designed

Why we'd leave it:

- Repetitive
- *Final Fantasy X* is on the shelf beside it

07

PlayStation 2 **VERDICT**



GRANDIA II

A fantasy future with the graphics of yesteryear. This ain't so grand..

Publisher: **Ubi Soft** Developer: **GameArts** Price: **£39.99** Players: **1**

Grandia II spins the typical high-fantasy tale. Its central character, a swordsman named Ryudo, is the reluctant, bad-ass hero (with the obligatory hidden past). He takes on the job of escorting a young girl called Elena (infected with an evil alter-ego – Millenia) to the Cathedral of Granas, where it's hoped the dark taint can be purged. Granas lies far across the other side of a brightly coloured gameworld, where towns and villages nestle between badlands overrun with wandering monsters.

Like most RPGs, *Grandia II* offers little that's new. There are spells of fire, ice, earth and air. Spells that speed you up, and heal hit points. Yet it does approach some things differently. There's an interesting pseudo real-time combat system. You also get the freedom to develop certain characters at a faster rate than others. Cleverly, instead of magical ability being character-specific, spells are stored in Mana Eggs that can be swapped between characters when required.



Grandia II's cute, cartoon-style visuals hardly push the PS2, but there are a few notable features (the usual random roaming monsters are visible on the main game, map, for example, rather than appearing out of nowhere). However, the animated cut-scenes jar against the rudimentary quality of the isometric graphics. *Grandia II* is also unbearably slow as you wade through pages of cringeworthy narrative. It's playable enough, but it's also repetitive, dated, and never completely captures the imagination. ■ **Dean Evans**

GRANDIA II

Why we'd buy it:
- It tries to be different
- What it lacks in beauty, it makes up for in size

Why we'd leave it:
- Dated graphics
- A repetitive story line... did we say that already?

05

PlayStation 2 **NERDICT**

SHIFTERS



Publisher: **3DO** Developer: **3DO**
Price: **£9.99** Players: **1**

Released as a follow-up to 3DO's early PS2 flop *Warriors Of Might And Magic*, the adventure/RPG hybrid *Shifters* has a similar fantasy feel to it, with a reasonably intuitive control system governing combat and spell casting. The new angle is that you can 'shift' into 24 creatures, but even this is badly executed. Plus, there are serious problems with basics like camera angles and the absurd non-player characters who merely follow you around for five minutes, then disappear. Add to this the cretinous opponent AI and you have a very poor RPG. ■ **RM**

SHIFTERS

Why we'd buy it:
- It's cheap and cheerful
- Intuitive controls

Why we'd leave it:
- It has more bugs than a M5 conference

03

PlayStation 2 **NERDICT**

ORPHEN: SCION OF SORCERY



Publisher: **Activision** Developer: **Shade Inc**
Price: **£29.99** Players: **1**

Billed as an action RPG, *Orphen* tries to be more *Legend of Zelda* than *Final Fantasy* with the resource management and statistics found in traditional RPGs abandoned in favour of an adventuring approach. And while this seems fairly original, the game couldn't be more formulaic. Based on a popular Japanese graphic novel, *Orphen*'s plot revolves around a magician travelling the world, getting into trouble and fighting big monsters. The structure works like this: battle, puzzle, boss, go to next location, repeat until bored senseless ■ **LH**

ORPHEN: SCION OF SORCERY

Why we'd buy it:
- Action-packed battles
- Hours of gameplay
- You like the novel?

Why we'd leave it:
- Repetitive gameplay
- Irritating dialogue
- Barely adequate visuals

04

PlayStation 2 **NERDICT**

ETERNAL RING



Publisher: **Ubi Soft** Developer: **From Software**
Price: **£39.99** Players: **1**

Part RPG, part primitive first-person blaster, *Eternal Ring* is a totally forgettable experience, the first 30 minutes of which are near coma-inducingly tedious. Repeated battles with ogres, giant moths, skull-faced monkeys and the odd gigantic dragon only serve to display their brainless AI. Elsewhere, there's little respite from the tiresome scrapping. Villages are relatively deserted and the most taxing puzzles consist of the 'find fire ring to melt frozen door' type – yawn. *Eternal Ring* is charmless and free of the slightest sliver of originality. ■ **MG**

ETERNAL RING

Why we'd buy it:
- Funny character voices
- Experimenting with gems and rings is quite fun

Why we'd leave it:
- Monotonous play
- Zombie-like adversaries
- Disappointing visuals

03

PlayStation 2 **NERDICT**

PIRATES: THE LEGEND OF BLACK KAT



Publisher: **EA** Developer: **Westwood**
Price: **£39.99** Players: **1-2**

Ahhh, Jim Lad, here be a pirate romp from Westwood, the landlubbers behind PC classic *Command and Conquer*. Each level has a series of tasks to perform (find an iron key, locate a map, destroy an enemy stronghold, etc) before you set sail on the main world map and do it all again somewhere else. This is a below-average RPG/platformer hybrid in both looks and playability. There are painfully long episodes when you're trudging over a deserted beach with nothing to do or see, apart from the odd monkey. And even monkeys can't save this. ■ **DM**

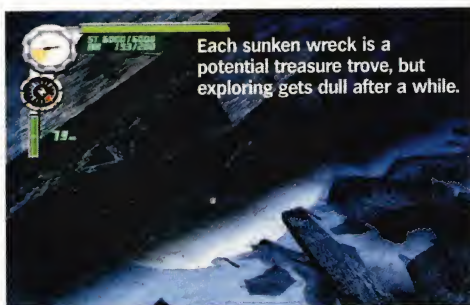
PIRATES: THE LEGEND OF BLACK KAT

Why we'd buy it:
- We liked 'Treasure Island' when we were younger
- Half-decent sea battles

Why we'd leave it:
- Tries to be original. Fails
- Very average graphics
- Tedious gameplay

03

PlayStation 2 **NERDICT**



Each sunken wreck is a potential treasure trove, but exploring gets dull after a while.



The land-based RPG bit. Point and click to advance the story.

EVERBLUE

Capcom's deep sea disaster sleeps with the fishes.

Publisher: **Capcom** Developer: **Arika** Price: **£39.99** Players: **1**

Like a pig with wheels, *Everblue* is a strange beast, mixing the basic structure of an RPG within the realm of, yes, underwater exploration. Set on the island of Daedalus, you play rookie diver Leo. Your immediate world is a series of land-based locations where you can talk to the locals, sell items you've found during your dives and buy new sub-aqua equipment. A story then unfolds, taking you from shallow sand sifting to deepwater wreck salvage. You often have to talk to character A and find item B before the story will advance. As the plot unfolds, more locations become available, offering new characters, items and destinations.

The repetitive bulk of *Everblue* takes place underwater. Viewed in first-person 3D, you dive into murky water thick with sea-gunk, surrounded by darting fish. It's certainly atmospheric – the wheeze of regulated breathing, the blub-a-lub-blub of rising air bubbles. To make things interesting your ability to dive is restricted by your equipment and your

strength, both of which improve as you play. Regular diving increases your stamina, allowing you to swim further, while new equipment enables you to stay underwater longer, swim faster and dive deeper.

There's often little more to *Everblue* than random undersea treasure hunting. Armed with a sonar device, you spend much of your time swimming towards distant sonar 'pings', hoping to dig up more than an old umbrella. It's pretty but it's not much of a game. ■ **Dean Evans**

EVERBLUE

Why we'd buy it:
- It's the only diving game on PS2

Why we'd leave it:
- Painfully slow
- Too much exploring, not enough spear-gun action

03

PlayStation 2 **VERDICT**

HEROES OF MIGHT AND MAGIC



Publisher: **3DO** Developer: **3DO**
Price: **£39.99** Players: **1**

This PS2 conversion suffers from being a stripped-down imitation of its PC counterpart. 3DO were probably trying to free up the gameplay and make it more accessible. Unfortunately, this has just diluted the experience. Here you simply buy yourself an army, instead of developing a city that supplies your army's needs. It was in this cultivation of resources and watching your army grow that the strategy and originality of the PC version resided. An uninspiring plod through bland and instantly forgettable GPR terrain isn't nearly as enjoyable. ■ **MJ**

HEROES OF MIGHT AND MAGIC

Why we'd buy it:
- Lose yourself in a medieval world
- You love the genre?

Why we'd leave it:
- Far too basic
- Looks like a big ugly dog
- You have Ring of Red

03

PlayStation 2 **VERDICT**

WARRIORS OF MIGHT AND MAGIC



Publisher: **3DO** Developer: **3DO**
Price: **£39.99** Players: **1**

Could this possibly represent a bold new take on the fantasy genre? Where a dark deity hasn't brought about Dark Times, and a tiresomely familiar lead character called Alleron doesn't knock back health potions like fizzy pop? Er – no. Every cliché of the fantasy genre turns up here to tedious effect and the story turns into a third-person hack and slash-'em-up where the hero has to fight his way through dungeons and castles populated by shambling zombies and evil magic wielders. Bad – and not in a good way. ■ **PR**

WARRIORS OF MIGHT AND MAGIC

Why we'd buy it:
- We'd been heavily drugged
- We were held at gunpoint
- We just love the series?

Why we'd leave it:
- Lazy attempt at a game
- No effort at innovation
- Rubbish characters

03

PlayStation 2 **VERDICT**

KING'S FIELD: THE ANCIENT CITY



Publisher: **Agetec** Developer: **From Software**
Price: **£39.99** Players: **1**

King's Field: *The Ancient City* is the fifth outing in an RPG series that has never struggled beyond the average mark. It's the worst kind of derivative, unimaginative pap. Your mission is to rid yourself of the unlucky 'Idol of Sorrow' that has damned your people to misery. Combat takes place in real-time 3D and it is laughably easy. See a monster wandering around? Simply press your attack button to hit it. There's really little more to the game than kill monster, grab treasure, upgrade capabilities, find tougher monster. Avoid. ■ **SF**

KING'S FIELD: THE ANCIENT CITY

Why we'd buy it:
- It's an RPG and there's no more Xena on TV

Why we'd leave it:
- Because life's too short

03

PlayStation 2 **VERDICT**

EVERGRACE



Publisher: **Ubi Soft** Developer: **Crave**
Price: **£39.99** Players: **1**

This game plays all the worst tricks in the book on you, seemingly just to reduce you to tears. Its designers were at the front of the class the day the lecturer at Evil Developer School taught them 'to extend the length of your game, don't provide extra content, just put useful objects at opposite ends of the level forcing the player to trapse repeatedly across the map'. The general lack of polish is completely unforgivable while the camera angle is so ridiculous that the is game next to impossible to play. So why bother? ■ **KG**

EVERGRACE

Why we'd buy it:
- Desperate for an RPG?
- Arcane-looking creatures
- A moment of madness?

Why we'd leave it:
- As empty as Greenland
- Basic game errors
- Totally empty

02

PlayStation 2 **VERDICT**

PUZZLE GAMES

Videogames aren't just about fast cars, gun violence and dragon punches. Welcome to the genre that exercises the brain just as much as the trigger finger.

REVIEWS

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FANTAVISION

KURI KURI MIX

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AQUA AQUA: WETRIX 2.0

SUPER BUST-A-MOVE

EGGO MANIA

THE WEAKEST LINK

WHO WANTS TO BE A MILLIONAIRE? 2ND EDITION



The two-player mode revives the massively competitive post-pub Worms action of old.

WORMS BLAST

The Worms have turned: from a multiplayer battle game to a Bust-A-Move style bubble-'em-up. But is it a turn for the worse?

Publisher: Ubi Soft Developer: Team 17
Price: £39.99 Players: 1-2

W e mocked, we sneered, we played, then we promptly ate our harsh words of prejudice with a hearty slice of humble pie because *Worms Blast* is, well, just that: a blast. But it was there to be shot down with tabloid hack headlines along the lines of 'multiplayer strategy game abandons its roots and rapes successful puzzle game for all its worth' flashed through our minds. Our cynicism was fuelled further by the fact that *Worms*, in its classic action strategy heaped with heavy artillery form, has yet to appear on PS2. So for Team 17's much-loved bird fodder brigade to make their next-gen debut in what, at first, appears to be a blatant rip off, was somewhat baffling.

This hostility lasted well into the first half-hour's play as we struggled to get to grips with the control system and fathom out the true purpose of the hefty arsenal of guns and power-ups. But then everything clicked into place and, without warning, *Worms Blast* suddenly transformed into one of the greatest two-player puzzle games we have ever



Various weapons and power-ups add to the bubble popping fun.

seen – and certainly the finest on PS2.

Like *Bust-A-Move*, the basic concept is to group coloured blocks together in order to make them disappear. But instead of firing your blocks/bubbles from a stationary gun turret, your chosen character can wield the weapons while bobbing around in water, in a rubber dinghy. This adds a new dimension to the tried and tested *Tetris*-style formula in the sense that you can paddle left and right while also controlling the trajectory and power of your

selected armament. Each of the six initially selectable worms handle differently on the waves and some are better equipped to deal with certain playing



//The sheer volume of wickedly original power-ups makes for a much more strategic battle//



Background scenery retains the standard Worms cartoon look.



There isn't much margin for error on this crowded puzzle.



Tardiness is your number one enemy as the clock relentlessly ticks.

WORMS ARMAGEDDON

The defining moment of *Worms Blast* is when you slap a friend around the face with a spiked metal gauntlet and challenge them on Versus mode. Although things start off tamely with both players resorting to politely clearing the obvious clusters of coloured blocks, once you free the '?' crates and your arsenal suddenly expands tenfold, the game really comes into its element. Check out these devilish tools of destruction...



1. The Laser: Bounce this sharp ray of light off the walls and cut a sizeable chunk out of your technicolour skyline.



2. The Sea Monster: Point this salivating leviathan at your foe and watch him desperately hammer ⓧ to avoid being eaten alive!



3. The Weather: Gamble with your own welfare as well as your opponent's by unleashing meteor showers, gale force winds and complete blackouts.



4. The Torpedo: Right. That's it. Enough's enough. Put your rival out of action for a while by firing one of Red October's finest right up his jacksyl!

conditions, of which there are a dazzling array.

Split into three main modes (Puzzle, Tournament and Versus) are some of the most dastardly challenging levels ever seen in a puzzle game, and most are played out against an unforgiving time limit that'll have you grinding your teeth down to bloodied stumps in frustration. In Puzzle mode you traverse a fantasy map visiting new worlds and attempting to clear the puzzles they present. The hook is that you never know what challenges the next world will bring and you'll frequently find all routes blocked by some heinously taxing problem area that simply cannot be cleared by mortal reflexes alone. Admittedly, the learning curve in this mode escalates so dramatically that younger players would be scared off relatively quickly. However, for hardcore puzzle fanatics this is utopia.

The real fruit of the loom, though, lies in the Versus mode. The aim is akin to *Bust-A-Move* in that you must send your opposition's skies clattering down around their ears, but the sheer volume of wickedly original power-ups makes for much more of a strategic battle – so much so, it can last for hours at a time.

With hundreds of varied levels posing refreshingly original problems, plus new characters and more manic modes to unlock, *Worms Blast* deserves to haunt your PlayStation 2 indefinitely. So go on, wriggle out of this one if you dare! ■ Ryan Butt

WORMS BLAST

Why we'd buy it:
- Infiltratingly addictive
- Spectacular in two-player mode

Why we'd leave it:
- Initially baffling controls
- Awkward to save
- Not exactly a looker



PlayStation 2 **NERDICT**

FANTAVISION

Glorified graphics demo? *Missile Command* for hippies? No – it's *Fantavision*. Prepare to be dazzled.



Publisher: SCEI Developer: SCEI
Price: £39.99 Players: 1-2

As with all the best puzzle games, the concept of *Fantavision* is extremely simple. You have to link together chains of ascending fireworks and detonate them to create crowd pleasing displays. Allow your rockets to fizzle out without triggering them and an energy/popularity bar will reduce by degrees. If the bar disappears, your game and the display is over. Keep popping the rockets with a minimum of wastage for the display's allotted time and you'll get to move on to the next location. That is the basic idea. Of course playing it is not that simple. Not anywhere near.

Rockets or shells come in three colours – red, blue and green – and to detonate the simplest combination you need to link three of a single shade. This linking of flares is



called a 'daisy'. As the screen fills with multicoloured shells you'll find that to avoid a rapidly shrinking energy bar you need to combine daisies. But wait – to do this and rack up the points you need rainbow rockets. These act like wild cards, enabling you to detonate various different colours in the same string. When you consider that a 'four daisy' combination will involve linking at least 15 rockets before any one of them splutters out, and thus breaking the whole chain, it's plain to see how hard 'simple' can become.

Of course, in any display there are going to be a couple of damp squibs, and *Fantavision* is no exception. You can't save the game and resume from your best position. Complete a level and you can save it to memory card, but this only allows you to access it in replay. Although this cranks up the desire to keep on playing, it does mean that completing the game needs a sizeable chunk of free time. Plus, at only eight levels (16 if you play on 'hard'), the game



isn't exactly long. Visually lush and highly playable though *Fantavision* undoubtedly is, it isn't anywhere near perfect.

Sony's inclusion of a two-player mode negates some of these shortfalls, and in a sense the random beauty of the game will encourage replay. But it's a shame that with just a few more levels, and decent save feature, this gem would've been hard to fault. As it is, *Fantavision* is addictive, innovative and very, very playable. ■ Paul Fitzpatrick

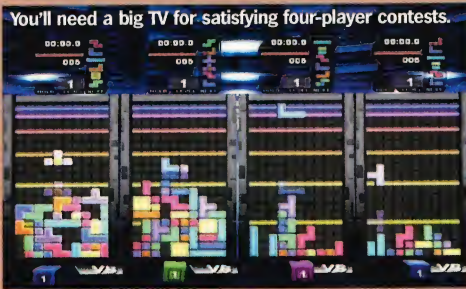
FANTAVISION

Why we'd buy it:
- Gorgeous to look at
- Highly innovative
- Totally addictive

Why we'd leave it:
- Lack of save option
- mid-game really grates
- More levels needed

07

PlayStation 2 VERDICT



TETRIS WORLDS

Complex. Captivating. Classic. Yup, the Russian block bonanza is back.

Publisher: THQ Developer: Blue Planet Software Price: £19.99 Players: 1-4

The old timer's back. Since conception back in 1985, *Tetris* has appeared on every electronic item from Game Boys to keyrings, watches to mobile phones. Simple in concept, players must guide blocks into a position to complete a horizontal line. The more lines completed, the more points gained. The question you may be asking is 'Why should I fork out £20 for a game that's been used over and over again?' Maybe you should instead ask 'Why has it been reproduced on so many formats?' The answer: its addictive nature.

The developer has tried to reinvent the classic by adding a Story mode to what is essentially an abstract experience. It did nothing for *Aqua Aqua*. It does nothing for *Tetris*. So ignore the fact that you have to complete levels of brightly-coloured block management to open a portal to another world. Just get stuck in. Six new modes have mutated the standard block formation in an attempt to get the grey

matter working harder. While these modes certainly add variety, *Tetris* doesn't really need freshening. The game is as hypnotic and as enthralling as it ever was. Before you know it, an hour has flown by. And then another. And another. If you haven't got access to play online and you gave your Game Boy away, give it a go, if only for the Multiplayer modes, so you can prove to your pals just who is top of the blocks. Playing *Tetris* is easy. It's the stopping that's hard.

■ Lou Wells

TETRIS WORLDS

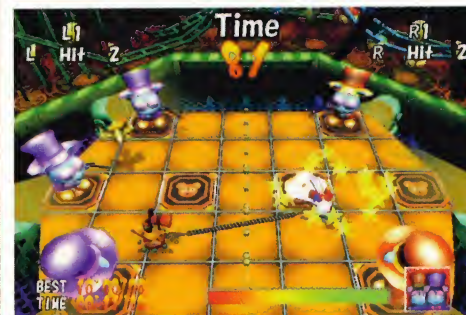
Why we'd buy it:
- It's compulsive
- Retro gaming at it's best

Why we'd leave it:
- Mundane graphics
- No better than the original *Tetris*

08

PlayStation 2 VERDICT

KURI KURI MIX



Publisher: Empire Interactive Developer: From Software
Price: £39.99 Players: 1-2

Chestnut and Cream are flopsy friends sent on a quest to find the missing moon. In order to progress they have to help each other out of tough situations. During early stages this involves little more than Chestnut throwing a switch to open a door for Cream, but things soon descend into such insanity as unlocking a door by dancing on a giant piano. Ideally, *Kuri Kuri* should be played by two people and as an exercise in co-operation, there's an ingenuity to the game that means once you've cracked it open you can hardly stop playing it. ■ BL

KURI KURI MIX

Why we'd buy it:
- 50 levels
- Original ideas
- Play with a mate

Why we'd leave it:
- Too mad for some
- Single-player no good
- You hate cartoon stuff

07

PlayStation 2 VERDICT

**AQUA AQUA:
WETRIX 2.0**

Publisher: **SCI** Developer: **Zed Two**
Price: **£24.99** Players: **1-4**

This moist puzzler is set in a world which needs land and water in equal supply to survive. By placing *Tetris*-esque blocks that fall from the heavens you build hills and walls to create lakes for the water, which falls in blue balls. The world is populated by Aquas (water spirits) and if there's too much water, they drown. Too much earth, and earthquakes rock the world. Four godlike bosses make life difficult, while ice cubes and bombs drop randomly (use them to blow up land). So addictive it should have its own support helpline. ■ **LW**

AQUA AQUA WETRIX 2.0**Why we'd buy it:**

- Addictive gameplay
- Beautifully rendered
- Great water effects

Why we'd leave it:

- Bosses hard to stop
- Too addictive
- Too cute for you?

07PlayStation 2 **VERDICT****SUPER BUST-A-MOVE**

A legendary puzzle game that's wearing thin around the edges.

Publisher: **Acclaim** Developer: **Taito** Price: **£19.99** Players: **1-2**

For the uninitiated this is a classic of the puzzle genre, right up there with the likes of *Tetris* and *Bomberman*. The gameplay is beautifully simple: you fire bubbles, you explode bubbles, you win, you lose, you start again for the rest of your life. But what it's doing on a PS2 is anyone's guess – it just looks wrong.

The sad truth is that this game has no place on next-gen machines. The series has never relied on graphical muscle, but surely something could've been done to make this game worth somewhere near the £20 price tag? That said, odd token gestures have been thrown in to improve the gameplay. Rather than the predictable bubble-bursting of yore, now bubbles turn into bowling balls and rip through clusters of spheres, clearing whole sections in record time, mini balls sneak through cracks in groups while conveyor belt walls ricochet bubbles in all directions. These inclusions are refreshing to the series and indicate how it may progress in coming years.

The main gripe revolves around the lack of any real variety. You can go head to head with a friend or against the CPU, something that hasn't altered since the first *Bust-A-Move* game. On a lesser system this would hold a semblance of credibility. On PS2 it's just baffling. This game could easily be released on any format so why pick one that's going to show its age? Dated and not very fitting as an exercise of PS2's capabilities, the bubble has finally burst. And not in a good way. ■ **Ben Lawrence**

SUPER BUST-A-MOVE**Why we'd buy it:**

- It's so damn cute
- Playable for a while
- First PS2 B-A-M game

Why we'd leave it:

- Ends far too quickly
- Doesn't belong on such a sophisticated system

04PlayStation 2 **VERDICT****EGGO MANIA**

Publisher: **Kemco** Developer: **HotGen**
Price: **£29.99** Players: **1-2**

The basic premise of *Eggo Mania* can be likened to *Tetris*. Different shaped blocks fall from the sky and you must direct them into position to create lines. The difference is that you control an Eggo who catches these blocks and places them on the grid. When you complete a line, you're awarded bonus blocks and the idea is to build a wall as high as possible to reach floating balloons at the top of the screen. Extra modes have been included in an attempt to prolong the experience, but they add little to the game. A bit of a bad egg, really. ■ **LW**

EGGO MANIA

Why we'd buy it:
- An insatiable addiction to puzzle games

Why we'd leave it:
- Smells a bit whiffy
- Tetris is 'top of the blocks'

04PlayStation 2 **VERDICT****THE WEAKEST LINK**

Publisher: **Activision** Developer: **Activision**
Price: **£39.99** Players: **1-7**

Hoping to emulate the success of Eidos' *Who Wants To Be A Millionaire?*, *The Weakest Link* is a multiplayer knock-out quiz based around the hit TV show format, allowing up to seven players to compete on the same Joypad. The game is a fair recreation, even going as far as to include a range of sarcastic comments from a robotic Anne Robinson. However, as you ultimately just want the questions, the fact that you're forced to endure many minutes of dull Robinson-isms just means you'll get bored after a while. Goodbye! ■ **LW**

THE WEAKEST LINK

Why we'd buy it:
- Testing questions
- We're in Anne's fan club

Why we'd leave it:
- Generally boring throughout

04PlayStation 2 **VERDICT****WHO WANTS TO BE A
MILLIONAIRE? 2ND EDITION**

Publisher: **Eidos** Developer: **Revolution**
Price: **£34.99** Players: **1-4**

Answer 15 questions in a row correctly and you win a million quid. It's just like the TV show. Except, of course, that you don't win a million quid. Nor is your nervous spouse squirming behind you in the audience as you throw away seven grand by thinking that the capital of Australia is Sydney. Nor do you get to phone a friend. Instead, you hear a pre-recorded message from someone pretending to be Bert from Barrow-in-Furness. With no cash to win and too many really easy questions, this is tedious stuff. And yes, that is our final answer. ■ **SR**

WHO WANTS TO BE A MILLIONAIRE? 2ND EDITION

Why we'd buy it:
- Even quiz freaks need their fix
- The family'll love it

Why we'd leave it:
- Tarrant looks hideous
- Answering easy early questions gets repetitive

04PlayStation 2 **VERDICT**

MUSIC GAMES

The groovy genre where Britney Spears mixes effortlessly with rapping dogs, dancing jungle creatures and lycra-clad guitar gimps.



REVIEWS

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FREQUENCY

MTV MUSIC GENERATOR 2

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EJAY CLUBWORLD

GITAROO MAN

PARAPPA THE RAPPER 2

SPACE CHANNEL 5 V1

P 097

BRITNEY'S DANCE BEAT

MODERNGROOVE: MINISTRY OF SOUND

MAD MAESTRO!

MAGIX MUSIC MAKER

WALT DISNEY'S JUNGLE BOOK GROOVE PARTY

MTV MUSIC GENERATOR 2

Codemasters have proved it's possible to cram the might of a professional recording studio into a PS2.



Negotiating the icons soon becomes second nature.



The visual theme changes based on the type of music your making.



Use multiple tracks to build a bangin' tune.

Publisher: **Codemasters** Developer: **Jester interactive**
Price: **£19.99** Players: **1 (1-4 in jam mode)**

It would be stupid to judge *MTV Music Generator 2* in the same way that one would a videogame. It's not what it looks like, it's not how playable it is, it's not even about an original idea. In fact it's not really a 'game' at all. At the risk of making it sound like a dull PC program, it's more of a tool or utility, with the fundamental aim being to make the creation of music as simple and as enjoyable as humanly possible.

You can make music from any number of styles including house, rock, trance, breakbeat, techno and r'n'b and after 20 minutes of fiddling you'll have produced something at least resembling a tune. A

mammoth 9000 samples have been included. There's percussion, live and electronic instruments, vocals and soundstage effects, all of which provide the user with virtually infinite scope for sonic adventure.

And there lies the genius behind *MTVMG2*. It puts an incredibly powerful music-making program in your hands (and in your living room) and then makes it so easy to use that it's impossible to not get hooked after half an hour's playing. With other games, the buzz of their final completion is quickly tempered by the realisation that, well, that's it. Quite literally Game Over.

Not so with *MTVMG2*. There is infinite possibility here for creativity and you can compose one song in two hours. Play it to

your mates. Then make another one. Repeat till fade...

To prove this point Codemasters has sought the cream of recent musical talent to create songs using *MTVMG2*. Included on the disc are the likes of Gorillaz, Bentley Rhythm Ace, Roni Size and Phitek, and the fact that these artists are able to get such professional compositions out of the PS2 only serves to show what the program is capable of with a bit of practice. *MTVMG2* is highly polished and nigh on flawless. ■ **George Walter**

MTV MUSIC GENERATOR 2

Why we'd buy it:
- Offers limitless musical opportunities
- Truly rewarding experience

Why we'd leave it:
- You have no interest in music at all
- You want the video mode

09

PlayStation 2 VERDICT

FREQUENCY

Welcome to a vibrant audio-visual endorsement of the 'Third Place'. You won't want to leave.



Rotate the walls of the octagon to select the track.



The energy bar on the left goes down when you hit bum notes.



This is more or less all that Jimi Hendrix saw throughout the Sixties.

Publisher: **SCEE** Developer: **SCEE**
Price: **£39.99** Players: **1-4**

Frequency is a hypnotic, exquisitely beguiling rhythm action game. It blends the button-bashing of most other examples of the genre with a tactical element that's more common to a puzzle game, and wraps it up with a wilfully eclectic soundtrack, producing a highly dynamic playing experience. With its constantly shifting array of power-ups and syncopating beats, *Frequency* is perhaps best described as a rhythm action counterpart of UGA's melodic shoot-'em-up, *Rez*.

As with all the best puzzle or rhythm action titles, the concept at the heart of the game is both shockingly simple, and devilishly difficult to describe. Players progress through

an octagonal tunnel, pressing particular buttons, as indicated on-screen, to build up musical tunes. Each side of the tunnel represents a different part, or track, of the overall tune. For example, one side might be the drum track and another the vocals. Completing two musical bars of one track results in that track playing of its own accord for several more bars, allowing the player to switch to another track. The object of the game is to reach the end of the tune without hitting too many duff notes.

There is, of course, much more to the game than tuneful tunnel travelling. Power-ups can be picked up to increase your score, adding an element of tactics when it comes to which track to choose next. On top of this basic mode there's also a split-screen competitive mode, while a Remix mode allows you to literally 'remix' one of the games' selection of tunes.

Frequency is an engrossing title that requires speed, rhythm and concentration. While it's easy to blunder your way through to the end of a song, the real rewards arrive when you're proficient enough to successfully build up every element of a tune. In doing this, you'll unlock further parts of the game. This is yet another fine example of the incredible variety in the PS2's library. ■ **David McCarthy**

FREQUENCY

Why we'd buy it:
- It's wildly original
- We just want one more go

Why we'd leave it:
- Not easy if you've got no sense of rhythm
- Too quirky for some!

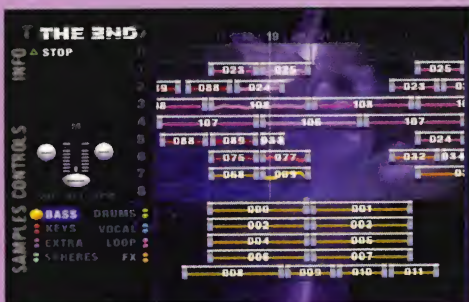
08

PlayStation 2 VERDICT

When Carl Cox isn't mixing he likes to load up eJay and, erm, mix!



+++ carl cox +++ dj +++ producer



EJAY CLUBWORLD

This serious-minded DJ simulation doesn't do requests.

Publisher: Empire Interactive Developer: eJay Corporation Price: £39.99 Players: 1-4

If eJay Clubworld is anything to go by, this dance music malarkey is actually a lot harder than you think. Skip past the Carl Cox intro and you're straight into it, selecting one of eight international clubs in which to fashion your glittering urban floor-filler. Each location corresponds to a different style of dance music and there are a total of over 10,000 samples. Alongside standard categories, such as keyboards, bass and loops, each club also includes extra samples tailored to suit its particular sound. You're advised to use vocals sparingly – unless you actually want to create a track so cheesy even Dave Pearce would think twice before spinning it.

Designing small sections of music is simple enough, but trying to structure a four-minute 20-track tune proves a tad trickier. A Tutorial mode is included, but it only covers the basic controls. Despite being cleanly laid out, the interface is initially confusing, too, although sheer force of repetition means selecting and inserting samples with the help of the

Dual Shock soon becomes second nature. Gradually, you learn how to best layer different sounds – and then you'll be mixing brass stabs over breakbeat loops with ease. If you're prepared to put a LOT of effort in.

Ultimately, there really is nothing to rival the satisfaction you get when your piece starts to take shape. But be warned: it will break your heart when you finally finish, only for a passer-by to comment, "I like the bit that sounds like Status Quo." ■ Tim Clark

EJAY CLUBWORLD

Why we'd buy it:
- Hugely enjoyable when a tune comes together

Why we'd leave it:
- We lack musical ability
- MTV Music Generator 2 is out on Platinum

08

PlayStation 2 VERDICT

GITAROO MAN



Publisher: THQ Developer: KOEI
Price: £39.99 Players: 1-4

KOEI's guitar teen soap opera is part musical cartoon adventure in acid-bright technicolor, part clumsy-but-sweet Pokémon-voiced fairy tale involving schoolboy U1 and his quest to prove that he's not an ineffectual loser. He's aided by his talking dog and a magical guitar that transforms him into a white-lycra-clad space rocker. The guitar-playing sections are intercut with more traditional, multi-button PaRappa-style bits, which initially seem impossibly fast, but soon fall to instinct. Perfectly silly, deliciously exuberant, and always fun. ■ SC

GITAROO MAN

Why we'd buy it:
- Both challenging and entertaining
- To support diversity

Why we'd leave it:
- If we couldn't fathom the appeal of PaRappa
- Too difficult for some

08

PlayStation 2 VERDICT

SPACE CHANNEL 5 V1



Publisher: SCEE Developer: Sega United Game Artists
Price: £39.99 Players: 1

The year is 2499. Rookie reporter and gazelle-limbed über babe Ulala is sent to Spaceport 9 to cover a fast-breaking story. An alien race called the Morollans have landed and are making people dance against their will. Armed with her microphone and ray guns Ulala must save the world by frolicking lasciviously to a loungecore soundtrack, pulling moves corresponding to the four buttons on the D-pad. Zap aliens, free humans, watch the gorgeous hypnotic visuals spin past. This is kitsch, short-lived but unmissable eye-candy. ■ PF

SPACE CHANNEL 5 V1

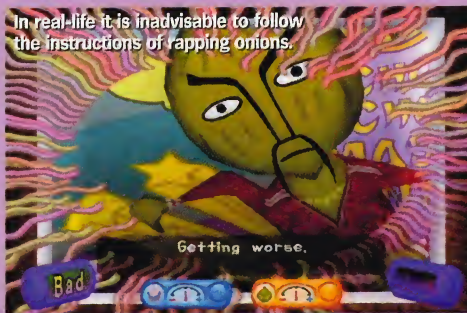
Why we'd buy it:
- It's original
- It's very stylish
- Ulala is sex

Why we'd leave it:
- It's short
- The novelty fades
- SC5 v2 is out soon

07

PlayStation 2 VERDICT

PARAPPA THE RAPPER 2



Kick, punch... Come on, you all remember...

Publisher: SCEE Developer: NanaOn-Sha Price: £39.99 Players: 1-2

The third adventure in PaRappa's 2D universe (after the original PaRappa and semi-sequel Um Jammer Lammy) is familiar rhythm action stuff. Cartoon performances begin, the songs start and symbols appear. Press the correct button, and PaRappa says a word. Press another, and he'll keep the flow going. And, remarkably, that's it. Improvise within limits, and your rating will go through the roof, but essentially it's a case of following the leader and maintaining the lyrical flow. For all the PlayStation 2's power, playing PaRappa 2 is like flipping back to 1996.

There are eight cartoon levels, and seven different songs. What evolution there is comes in the form of three meters along the bottom of the screen, available after one circuit through the game, which inform the dedicated rapper of the specifics of their style. The first represents how strictly you're sticking to the pattern you've been given; the second the amount of original material you're including; the

third judges the speed and enthusiasm of your rhythms. While they prove substantially irrelevant to PaRappa masters, they do play some part in helping newcomers gain the coveted 'Cool' ranking.

PaRappa isn't like other games, and if you find yourself comparing it to some top-grade PS2 releases in terms of depth or longevity it'll come up short. But in terms of spirit, imagination, and simple, core-level fun, PaRappa can't be beaten. ■ Ste Curran

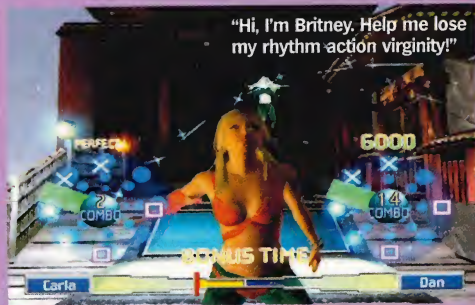
PARAPPA THE RAPPER 2

Why we'd buy it:
- PaRappa's a gaming icon, and this won't disappoint
- Funky cartoon visuals

Why we'd leave it:
- Much, much too brief
- Simplistic structure isn't for everyone

07

PlayStation 2 VERDICT



BRITNEY'S DANCE BEAT

Britney's debut: it's not a mess, not quite a good game.

Publisher: THQ Developer: Metro Graphics Price: £29.99 Players: 1-2

Like most rhythm action games *Britney's Dance Beat* looks simple enough. Each dance audition is a test of your hand/eye coordination and your ability to push the joypad buttons correctly (or prance around a plastic dance mat) in fast-paced sequences. At the bottom of the screen a rotating bar spins clockwise within a dance dial. As each song starts, shapes appear on the outside ring of the dial, while D-pad directions appear on the inner ring. When the rotating bar passes over one of these symbols, you press the corresponding button to increase your Combo points score.

The fewer mistakes you make, the higher your score rises and the better your character dances. In each audition you compete against a rival dancer and a gauge at the bottom of the screen shows who's currently winning the dance-off. The single-player game features a total of ten auditions with increasingly faster songs (and more shapes). If you do well all you get to unlock is a disappointing series of behind-the-

scenes Britney clips, when what you should get is a final boss encounter against evil Justin Timberlake. The Two-player mode provides a little extra depth, but with only five featured songs and fleeting appearances by the Brits, there's not enough longterm gameplay for rhythm action devotees.

Fun, hypnotic and tricky on those later levels, *Britney's Dance Beat* puts a little pop pizzazz into the rhythm action genre. Fans of Ms Spears will overlook the game's lack of depth. The rest of us should know better. ■ **Dean Evans**

BRITNEY'S DANCE BEAT

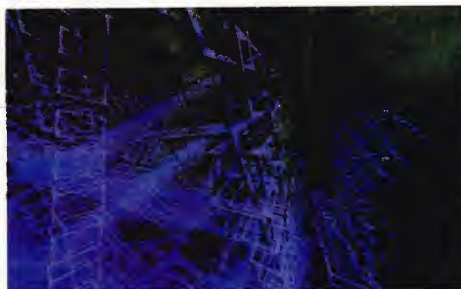
Why we'd buy it:
- Because Britney Spears is brilliant
- Britney! Britney! Britney!

Why we'd leave it:
- Challenging but shallow rhythm action
- No rewards for fans

06

PlayStation 2 **NERDICT**

MODERNGROOVE: MINISTRY OF SOUND EDITION



Publisher: Ubi Soft Developer: ModernGroove
Price: £19.99 Players: 1

Beware. The difference between this and *MTV Music Generator* is that here you can't actually create or edit the aural accompaniment. Instead, you're given five hours of house and trance while you just provide the lights, video and 3D shapes. This isn't a game - it's a light show, a miasma of organic shapes spewing out over a visual phrasebook ranging from *Tron* to *The Matrix* and back again. Okay, so it's not really a game, but the music's okay value for £20 and that's without the retina-friendly fireworks. Or you could just go clubbing with some friends. ■ **IW**

MODERNGROOVE: MINISTRY OF SOUND EDITION

Why we'd buy it:
- Looks great
- Sounds fantastic
- Boosts yer street cred

Why we'd leave it:
- Has a limited life span
- The music is already out-of-date

06

PlayStation 2 **NERDICT**

MAD MAESTRO!



Publisher: Eidos (Fresh Games) Developer: SCEI
Price: £39.99 Players: 1

The aim with this interesting take on rhythm action, is to conduct a series of classical music pieces flawlessly. You do this by hitting the required button as a 'cue ball' moves between 'cue points' on-screen. The game then adds D-pad arrows (to isolate parts of the orchestra) and a star (indicating that you must hold the button down until the next 'cue point'). Now imagine synchronising all this while *Flight Of The Bumblebee* spirals from the speakers. *Mad Maestro!* doesn't last very long and has no two-player mode, but it is charming and fun. ■ **PF**

MAD MAESTRO!

Why we'd buy it:
- A mighty challenge
- We love that doe-eyed Japanese anime style

Why we'd leave it:
- There's no gore
- We have absolutely no rhythm

06

PlayStation 2 **NERDICT**

MAGIX MUSIC MAKER



Publisher: Fast Trak Developer: Magix
Price: £39.99 Players: 1-2

Where *MTV Music Generator 2* gives both novices and experts the flexibility to make original music, *Magix Music Maker* is strictly for people who want quick, easy results. Sadly, the interface is complex and unwieldy, but the samples are crisp, with a live, professional sound that *MTVMG2* lacks. However, what makes Jester's game so exemplary is the way you can make something sound brilliant but also unlistenable. *Music Maker* is more 'music on rails' and as a result won't appeal to those looking for a cheap home studio alternative. ■ **GW**

MAGIX MUSIC MAKER

Why we'd buy it:
- Professional samples
- That cool Video Editing mode

Why we'd leave it:
- Badly designed interface
- Not enough scope for individual creativity

06

PlayStation 2 **NERDICT**

JUNGLE BOOK GROOVE PARTY



Publisher: Ubi Soft Developer: Disney Interactive
Price: £39.99 Players: 1-2

Dancing games can produce pots of booty-shaking hilarity. However, simply pressing the directional buttons in time as on-screen symbols flip to the centre of static boxes just doesn't cut it anymore. Even worse, the button presses generally aren't even in sync with the scatter-gun beats, so there's no sense of participating in the song (even when using the mat) and little sense of beating out a rhythm. Undeniably, it's at its best when using a dance mat but it always keeps the player on the edge of being involved without ever really delivering. ■ **MJ**

JUNGLE BOOK GROOVE PARTY

Why we'd buy it:
- Your mate makes a prat of himself on the dance mat
- Occupies small children

Why we'd leave it:
- Hopelessly realised
- Very simplistic gameplay
- Awful songs

04

PlayStation 2 **NERDICT**

STRATEGY GAMES

Forget the quick fix nature of regular action games. With the following titles, strategic thought and careful planning will serve you better than overactive thumbs.

REVIEWS

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COMMANDOS 2: MEN OF COURAGE

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RING OF RED

AGE OF EMPIRES II: THE AGE OF KINGS

THEME PARK WORLD

KESSEN II

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KESSEN

GIANTS: CITIZEN KABUTO

CONFLICT ZONE

ARMY MEN: RTS

ROBOT WARLORDS



COMMANDOS 2: MEN OF COURAGE

Seven men, one woman and a dog face overwhelming odds on the deadly battlegrounds of World War II.

Publisher: Eidos Developer: Pyro
Price: £39.99 Players: 1

Commandos 2: Men Of Courage is not just another RTS game. It doesn't involve resources or troop building, nor does it require lightning reactions or a mastery of pointing-and-clicking. Instead, it requires careful thought and planning, timing and practiced action. Realised in sumptuous isometric 3D, Commandos 2 offers real-time WWII action with an amazing attention to detail. There are nine characters to control, 17 different weapons and 28 items. Using them, you'll sneak, bomb, stab, gas and shoot your way from occupied France to the jungles of Burma.

In each missions you control a number of Commandos, each with their own specialist skills and weapons. The Green Beret, for example, is a brutish grunt with deadly knife skills; the Diver comes equipped with scuba gear for underwater work; the Driver supplements his vehicular abilities with homemade weaponry including bear traps and Molotov cocktails. Each mission is a sprawling military puzzle. How do you sneak

aboard a heavily-guarded Japanese aircraft carrier? What's the best way to blow up the bridge over the river Kwai? The game will point you in the right direction, but won't tell you how to get there. That's up to you. That's the challenge.

Commandos 2 is a huge game. After the introductory 'training' levels, each mission takes place in a vast and detailed location – a German submarine base and its surrounding buildings, a bomb-shattered French town, castle Colditz and the village beyond its walls. In addition to the extensive exterior settings, each building features a number of interior locations, all with searchable furniture. The isometric viewpoint lets you pan freely around the level



//Sneak, bomb, stab, gas and shoot your way from occupied France to the jungles of Burma//

and zoom in and out to get the best view. Both interior and exterior views can be rotated to get the best view.

Each of the locations is patrolled by enemy soldiers. As in MGS, these scan their environment responding to anything they see or hear. Using the game's built-in sight indicator, you can see where the guards are looking – their



You've been rumbled! Expect a swarm of enemy troops.



Crossing bridges makes you very vulnerable to enemy fire.

FAULTLESS FIGHTING

Commandos 2 rewards the exhaustive searching of every cupboard, filing cabinet and desk drawer with pieces of a bonus jigsaw. Collect 'em all to unlock the extra scenarios.



1. In one of the later missions, your team of Commandos must infiltrate the Japanese-held port of Haiphong to destroy a series of fuel tanks and then sneak aboard the aircraft carrier Shinano.



2. Collect all the bonuses and you'll unlock an extra Shinano mission: Disable all of the Japanese Zeroes on the flight deck, then sneak inside the carrier to radio allied bombers. Very, very tricky indeed.



field of vision is represented by a green cone that changes to red if they have spotted an intruder. Your task is to guide your Commandos around these locations (eliminating some soldiers, avoiding others) to complete your overall mission objective and several sub-objectives. The gameplay can become repetitive, a cycle of distract guard, KO guard, tie or gag guard, hide guard, search guard. But the missions spice up the basics, allowing you to throw grenades through windows, destroy tanks with a bazooka, snipe at soldiers from rooftops and fight sharks underwater.

Commandos 2 is big, complex and hugely challenging. You're never at a loss for what to do, even though you may struggle to do it. The key to victory is in knowing what your soldiers are capable of and how to use them to best effect. The learning curve may be steep, and the control system fiddly at first (eventually the direct analogue control of your soldiers works better than the point-and-click movement in the original) but once you've mastered the basics and learned to move cautiously, Commandos 2 becomes a strategy game that's beyond compare. ■ Dean Evans

COMMANDOS 2: MEN OF COURAGE

Why we'd buy it:
- Huge levels and hidden bonus missions
- Complex combat

Why we'd leave it:
- Slow-paced and possibly intimidating to the real-time strategy novice

08

PlayStation 2 **VERDICT**



"Look out, chaps, here comes Fritz in a bally giant robot tank!"



RING OF RED

Imagine WWII was still raging on in a giant mechanical slugfest.

Publisher: Konami Developer: KCET Price: £19.99 Players: 1

Japan at the end of WWII. In an alternate reality, the Bomb never happened and the country has been divided three ways – Russian Japan, the collaborators and the Japanese Republic. Somehow (let's not ask) mechanoid technology emerges and quickly becomes the principle offensive weapon in the new Japanese War. You are a trainee mech pilot in a battle simulation when something goes horribly wrong – a prototype mech with superior fire-power is hijacked in broad daylight. Because you were training against it at the time, you're ordered to pursue it...

So, the chase to prevent the mech leaving the mainland begins across the undulating plains of Japan, all played out in a series of grid-hopping turns. This part of the game is pedestrian and hinders what would otherwise be a non-stop mechanical slugfest. Once you encounter the enemy though, watch that red mist cloud your vision as huge mechs and hundreds of soldiers fight spectacular battles.

Ring Of Red's surprising appeal comes from an amazing balance of strategy, user-friendly interface, lethal robots and plenty of gut spillage. The thrill of walloping warheads into mechd on the other side of the battlefield and mowing down battalions of troops is unsurpassed. Witnessing the enemy collapse in billowing smoke is fantastic too. Sadly, this is unlikely to break into the top ten because of its mechanoid/turn-based pedigree, but *Ring of Red* is top class and another triumph for Konami. ■ Ben Lawrence

RING OF RED

Why we'd buy it:
- Refreshingly original
- Surprisingly in-depth
- Ferocious battles

Why we'd leave it:
- Slightly too quirky
- Too pedestrian early on
- Turn-based strategy?

08

PlayStation 2 VERDICT

AGE OF EMPIRES II: THE AGE OF KINGS



Publisher: Konami Developer: Microsoft/Ensemble Studios/KCET Price: £19.99 Players: 1

A conversion of the PC empire-building classic, *AOEII* is an isometric 3D civilisation sim where players control every aspect of an entire Medieval society from a lowly woodcutter to an all-powerful king, improving their settlements by advancing technology and dominating other races by waging war. 13 civilisations are provided including Vikings, Celts and Japanese, each with their own strengths, weaknesses and special items. Sustained play will reward patient gamers with immense depth and engrossing historical warfare. ■ JS

AGE OF EMPIRES II: THE AGE OF KINGS

Why we'd buy it:
- Huge gameplay depth
- Features excellent historical campaigns

Why we'd leave it:
- Poor controls
- Annoying AI

07

PlayStation 2 VERDICT

THEME PARK WORLD



Publisher: EA Developer: Bullfrog Price: £39.99 Players: 1

It's a genuine compliment to *TPW* that a seemingly modest concept can be such a delight to play. You start your career as a theme park tycoon with an expanse of featureless land, an imposing entrance gate and \$30,000 to play with. You then lay paths, place features, rides, shops and restaurants, and hire staff. Your success from then on depends on balancing the budget and pleasing John and Janine public and their hyperactive kids. It's a charming, fun and thoroughly rewarding experience and well worth the entry price. ■ PF

THEME PARK WORLD

Why we'd buy it:
- Easy to pick up
- Ace fun
- Sublime detail

Why we'd leave it:
- Bit repetitive
- Similar to the first one
- Too easy

07

PlayStation 2 VERDICT



Unit leaders boast special spells to bring about meteors showers, hail storms and, erm drizzle.



Dettori got carried away after his Derby win.

KESSEN II

Experience the joy of Chinese warlords getting medieval on your ass.

Publisher: THQ Developer: KOEI Price: £39.99 Players: 1

Set in feudal China, *Kessen II* is a game of Risk-style province-toppling that's tightly pinned to an unfolding narrative. You play the part of Liu Bei, a young warrior trying to rescue his girlfriend from the clutches of moustachio'ed villain Cao Cao. This initial story line, told through lengthy and overly frequent cut-scenes, is quickly expanded into an epic fight for a large chunk of China. Cue a series of 11 battles, firmly rooted in historical realism, but with a touch of *Final Fantasy*-style magic to spice up the repetitive hack 'n' slash.

In an attempt to console-ify war mechanics even further, KOEI has streamlined *Kessen II* for your convenience. Rather than designing your own strategy, the game offers three pre-defined tactics in a pre-battle War Council. All tactical manoeuvring takes place on the map screen, giving you a bird's-eye view of the terrain and your forces on it.

Each army under your command consists of several smaller fighting units – swordsmen, archers and cavalry.

Once battle has started, it's possible to zoom into the brawl and even take control of an individual unit leader. Here, you assist in the bludgeoning, or activate any special abilities that the leader may possess.

Kessen II's gameplay is a case of cut-scene, cut-scene, battle, cut-scene. Less a wargame, more a fantasy novel with interactive battles. Yet despite this tactical simplicity, it remains utterly absorbing – even if you feel you're watching the game more than actually playing. ■ Dean Evans

KESSEN II

Why we'd buy it:
- There are very few wargames on PS2
- Breathtaking graphics

Why we'd leave it:
- Too many cut-scenes, not enough game
- A little on the easy side

07

PlayStation 2 VERDICT

KESSEN



Publisher: **EA** Developer: **KOEI**
Price: **£39.99** Players: **1**

Kessen is a real-time strategy epic with a strong grounding in Japanese history, specifically the Tokugawa's rise to power at the end of the 16th Century. It's not for everyone. Adrenaline junkies will hate all the planning, and those expecting anything like the high impact combat of *Dynasty Warriors 2* will be disappointed. But for those prepared to spend hours plotting (and crying as those plans fall to pieces), *Kessen* will absorb. It's definitely worth a look, especially if you can find it cheaper than its superior sequel (see left). ■ **SC**

KESSEN

Why we'd buy it:
- A work of true beauty
- Near infinite possibilities
- Brilliant gameplay

Why we'd leave it:
- If real-time strategies bore you to tears
- If you want quick fix fun

07

PlayStation 2 **VERDICT**



GIANTS: CITIZEN KABUTO

RTS, spellcasting and Smarties. *Giants* has it all...

Publisher: **Interplay** Developer: **Planet Moon** Price: **£39.99** Players: **1**

Giants: *Citizen Kabuto* throws you into the middle of a conflict between the Sea Reapers (a vicious aquatic race) and the Smarties (bubble-headed Yoda-types). To complicate matters, the Sea Reapers created a giant called Kabuto, who rebelled against his creators and is now roaming their island in a rage. Interestingly, the player sees the conflict unfold from different sides. First with a group of stranded astronauts called the Meccaryns; then with the Sea Reaper Queen, Delphi; and, finally, with the angry Kabuto himself.

Early missions involving the Meccaryns are among the best in the game, with you having to collect weapons and save Smarties from the pernicious Sea Reapers. Indigenous lifeforms try to thwart your progress and strategy elements become more prominent once enemy snipers and guard towers appear. Unfortunately, Kabuto's missions mostly consisting of stomping on buildings and eating Smarties until energy levels have been replenished. Although this can be fun

in short bursts, it soon becomes repetitive.

In terms of quality, *Giants: Citizen Kabuto* is something of a mixed bag. It offers a great deal of variety, but enormous loading times, poor enemy AI and a few graphical glitches spoil what could otherwise have been an exceptional title. Still, for those who don't mind waiting around for a few minutes every time a level has to be restarted, *Giants* provides some unusual and engaging gameplay styles. ■ **Mark Walbank**

GIANTS: CITIZEN KABUTO

Why we'd buy it:
- Variety in species
- Chunky weapons
- Good mini-games

Why we'd leave it:
- Horrible loading times
- Poor AI
- Repetitive Kabuto section

06

PlayStation 2 **VERDICT**

CONFLICT ZONE



Publisher: **Ubi Soft** Developer: **MASA**
Price: **£19.99** Players: **1-2**

In this real-time strategy wargame you skip lightly over a suitably war-torn location, deploying troops, building bases and destroying anyone wearing a different colour uniform. The slowly unravelling plot, user-friendly controls and media-sensitive gameplay are all compelling. Given time and patience, fans of the genre will unearth an enjoyable game that rewards perseverance with clever artificial intelligence and an absorbing strategic experience. And, at £20, there are plenty of worse games to spend your money on. ■ **DM**

CONFLICT ZONE

Why we'd buy it:
- Fine war simulation
- Interesting slant on established genre

Why we'd leave it:
- Could have done more with PS2's power
- Controls get fiddly

06

PlayStation 2 **VERDICT**

ARMY MEN: RTS



Publisher: **3DO** Developer: **Pandemic Studios**
Price: **£19.99** Players: **1**

The *Army Men* titles have all been pitifully bad so far, so we weren't expecting much from this RTS. The game blends 3DO's iconic toy soldiers with the point-and-click mechanics of *Command & Conquer*. The result is a tactical isometric wargame with base-building and unit construction. You assume command of the green forces who are fighting an ongoing war against their tan adversaries. It's a case of melt-or-be-melted and the result is a fun and playable wargame: a combination of lightweight strategising and *Toy Story*-style visuals. ■ **DE**

ARMY MEN: RTS

Why we'd buy it:
- C&C-style play
- Cartoon visuals

Why we'd leave it:
- Limited unit AI
- Basic attack tactics
- All-too-repetitive missions

06

PlayStation 2 **VERDICT**

ROBOT WARLORDS



Publisher: **Midas Interactive** Developer: **DaZZ**
Price: **£29.99** Players: **1-2**

Controlling a team of ten-foot gun-toting robots armed with heavy artillery around huge arenas may seem like an exciting prospect. However, what this game offers is a deeply dull, turn-based strategy adventure packing an enjoyment factor of approximately zero. The missions are simple enough (clear the city block of enemy robots or take pops at each other from either side of a jumbo jet) but you'll need to set aside hours of your life to progress through the levels. Only diehard strategy nuts will get a kick out of this one. ■ **RM**

ROBOT WARLORDS

Why we'd buy it:
- Deep gameplay
- Decades of effort needed

Why we'd leave it:
- Tedious beyond belief
- No satisfaction

04

PlayStation 2 **VERDICT**

SPORTS GAMES

Pull on those tight, white shorts (or a gymslip if you prefer), plug in that MultiTap and grab a joypad – it's time to get physical. Well, in the gaming sense at least...

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TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 3

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MAT HOFFMAN PRO BMX 2

AGGRESSIVE INLINE

NFL QUARTERBACK CLUB

AIRBLADE

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ISS 2

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MX SUPERFLY

MIKE TYSON HEAVYWEIGHT BOXING

KNOCKOUT KINGS 2002

SPLASHDOWN

DAVE MIRRA FREESTYLE BMX 2

THIS IS FOOTBALL 2002

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SPORTS ROUND-UP





PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER

The Brazil 1970 of footballing sims enters the PS2 stadium and performs a digital scissor kick into the top left corner of playability.

Publisher: **Konami** Developer: **KCE (Tokyo)**
Price: **£39.99** Players: **1-8**

Pro Evolution Soccer captures the feel of football almost perfectly. As every under-achieving midfielder stroller will tell you, pace is vitally important and where other footy games either amble along or go so damn quickly it's impossible to play a measured game, like that baby bear's porridge, *Pro Evolution Soccer* gets it just right with matches unfolding at an expertly-balanced pace.

Equally, the number of available moves lends itself to an intuitive game of footy. With short pass, long pass, through ball and shoot, you have all the ammunition you need to build a tactical, adaptable approach to the game. You don't need an arsenal (no pun intended) of special moves – if an overhead kick is required your player will perform it providing he's in the right place at the right time. You simply press shoot and get the angle just right. This is a game about skill rather than button combinations. And yet, beneath the basic set up there are more complicated skills available. You can one-two, shimmy, chip, step-over, dummy. The learning curve is as sweet as a Beckham cross.

The flow of the game is also superbly realistic. At first you'll find it difficult to keep possession and get on the score sheet, but the trick is to approach it as you would an actual football match. Here, as in real football, results have to be earned. Play a passing game, move into space, sprint only when a gap appears and always stay patient and you'll find yourself in goal-scoring positions. Just as impressive is the way that individual players perform with authenticity: Roberto Carlos and his long-range free kicks; the blistering pace of Owen; Keane's never-say-die aggression; the skill of Rivaldo, the power of Batistuta. Konami really knows its stuff.

Of course, this brilliance has always been evident in the



//Pro Evolution Soccer hammers FIFA and every other football game into non-league obscurity//

ISS series and yet the games have always been outsold by EA's inferior *FIFA* franchise. This can be partly attributed to EA's constant TV and print advertising. But the main reason is the trappings – the strips/teams/player names that the FIFA licence brings.

Unfortunately, *PES* loses out once again in this crucial department. Where *FIFA* offers almost every major league in the world, *PES* has just 32 club teams, so if you don't support the likes of Man Utd, Milan, Barcelona, Real Madrid, Bayern Munich and Arsenal – you'll be disappointed.

And even though the series has an official FIFPro licence for the first time, this only applies to 29 nations and means all the South American countries and a few European ones are lumbered with jumbled up player names – Batistuta becomes Butatista, Giggs is Gregs. Admittedly, it's a minor fault – and the names can be edited if you really want – but in a game that oozes

TEAMS OF THE CENTURY

By winning various international tournaments in *Pro Evolution Soccer*, there are five classic sides to unlock full of legendary players from football history (all with daft, jumbled names, naturally). Here are three of the teams, we'll let you discover the others yourselves.



1. Classic Brazil: Win the American Cup playing as Brazil to get this fantastic team. With players like Pele, Zico, Garrincha and Careca available up front, the attacking skill is frightening.



2. Classic Netherlands: Lift the European Cup as the Netherlands to get their total footballing predecessors. Van Basten, Cruyff and Gullit in attack, Rijkaard and Koeman in defence. Stunning



3. Euro Classic: Win the European Cup with either England, Italy or Yugoslavia to unlock this team of Euro all-stars. Best, Charlton, Cantona, Platini, Zoff, Baresi, Moore – you won't know who to leave out.

realism in every other department, this lack of authenticity is bound to annoy a few football-mad punters.

Gameplay-wise, there are very few complaints. The first touch can sometimes be erratic with perfectly weighted passes bouncing off the receiver's leg. And that old problem about players having to complete their animation cycles can see defenders running the ball into their own net, or wingers taking it a step too far for the perfect cross.

But these minor problems can't disguise the fact that *Pro Evolution Soccer* hammers the *FIFA* series and every other football game into non-league obscurity. We could go on and on about authenticity but until you get your hands on the game you won't believe quite how much *PES* looks, plays and feels like real football. ■ Lee Hart

PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER

Why we'd buy it:
- Astonishingly realistic
- It's the best football game ever made

Why we'd leave it:
- Terrible commentary
- Occasional control frustrations

09

PlayStation 2 **VERDICT**



SSX TRICKY

If EA's super-cool snowboarding romp wasn't tricky enough...



Ginger-afroed body-popping Eddie is a great new addition to the character roster.



Publisher: EA Sports Big Developer: EA Canada
Price: £39.99 Players: 1-2

With *SSX Tricky*, EA again moves the benchmark for extreme sports games, just as everybody else was struggling to catch up to its first effort. The 'old' tracks are familiar in little but name. The Race and Showoff modes have been radically differentiated, with Showoff courses now littered with rails and leaps. And with the tracks geared towards either flat-out boosting or more considered grinding and flipping, it really is like playing two games in one.

The balance of the game is perfect. As your rider's skills improve, the game unlocks trickier tracks and tougher showoff challenges. Going back through the tracks and gaining gold medals allows you to increase your stats, without which the chances of success on the harder courses are slim. *SSX Tricky* is a game you can play for months without discovering all the shortcuts, making all the rails or hitting all the five-time-multiplying red snowflakes, so there's always room for new personal best scores.

A brand new entry-level venue, Garibaldi, gives you the chance to find out what the uber-tricks are all about on its frightening cliff drops. At the other end of the scale, Alaska offers insanely challenging vertical ice-walls, moguls, blind curves, massive leaps of faith and a series of seemingly



unreachable snowflake multipliers, keeping that showoff gold medal just out of reach.

Tighter physics results in even more elaborate tricks and combos, including the almighty uber-tricks. With your boost at full, a combo of flip and tweak combined with big air allows you to perform a gravity-defying uber-trick, lighting one of the 'tricky' letters above your meter. Illuminating all six letters provides you with Infinite maximum boost giving you the speed and invincibility required to try the mythical super-uber trick. Naturally, the potential to combine uber-tricks with spins, flips, railslide combos and snowflake multipliers makes for some colossal scores.

Two-player races zip along without any noticeable drop in framerate, and with all those additional opportunities for big point totals, showoff score battles become ever more heated. *Tricky* is a sheer joy to play and it's one of the best reasons to own a PS2 there is. ■ **Sam Richards**

SSX TRICKY

Why we'd buy it:
- Frighteningly addictive
- Genuinely rewarding
- Fantastic speed and looks

Why we'd leave it:
- Not a full 'sequel'
- Et, Juergen's not in it

09

PlayStation 2 VERDICT



SSX

Publisher: EA Sports Big Developer: EA Canada
Price: £19.99 Players: 1-2

SSSX is a supreme snowboarder, boasting masterful control, great tracks and ace visuals. There are two distinct paths to glory here. The first is through the pursuit of speed alone, beating five CPU opponents to the bottom of the hill. To become a true SSX all-rounder though, you'll need to master each mountain in Showoff mode. Here, you're required to rack up points by performing all manner of flashy stunts at breakneck speed. Easily the best snowboarding game ever created – until its even trickier sequel arrived, that is (see left). ■ **SR**

SSX

Why we'd buy it:
- Lashing of style
- Imaginative courses
- Top two-player mode

Why we'd leave it:
- We wouldn't

09

PlayStation 2 VERDICT

TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 3

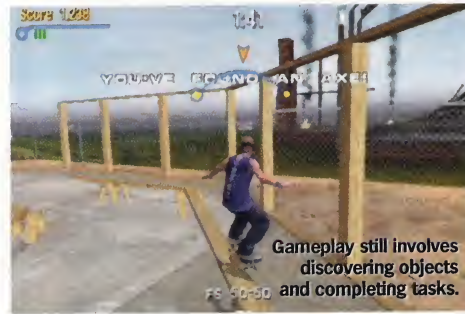
The old man of the skateboard is back with a third quest into the heady world of trick-styling.



The new environments are even more interactive. It's stunt heaven.



The new balance bar lets you judge lip tricks to perfection.



Gameplay still involves discovering objects and completing tasks.

Publisher: Activision Developer: Neversoft
Price: £39.99 Players: 1-4 Out: Now

Tony Hawk's 3 resides in a fantasy world where US suburbs co-exist with futuristic Tokyo alleyways, each filled with interactive scenery. The game is founded on the principles that underpinned its predecessors. There are three flavours of basic trick: grinds (scraping your board across edges); grabs (in which you put at least one hand on the board and spin); and flips, where you kick your board into a spin of its own. All the stunts are carried out by combining D-pad movements with the corresponding trick button.

THPS3 features far superior animation to the previous games and so more accurate body positioning is now required. The game uses the familiar dynamic of score and

task-based goals which unlock later levels. Capitalising on PS2's greater power, the arenas are now not only larger, but also far more densely populated. When in LA, with its police chases and aimless pedestrians, you genuinely sense you're in a living environment.

Most importantly, though, by-standers have been incorporated into gameplay through Spectator Bonuses (points rewards for showing off) and Interactivity, for when you complete goals involving the folk around you. On the Canada level, for example, you must free local kid, Chuck, from a lamppost to which his tongue is frozen.

You can also expect to earn bigger points because there are now far more tricks. There's also a balance bar on lip tricks and grinds as well as manuals, so you can eke out every second of stuntery. A revolutionary new tool is the 'revert', which offers a swivel of the board and means you no longer have to end tricks on a ramp manoeuvre. It's

now possible to increase the stats of your skater, too. Oh, and there are some great new multiplayer games too, providing ultra-competitive stunt showdowns with your pals.

For intuitive gameplay that you can pick up for two minutes as easily as two hours without losing interest, Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3 is a leading contender for the crown of Best Extreme Sports Title Ever. Honestly, you won't put this baby down for weeks... ■ Lee Hall

TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 3

Why we'd buy it

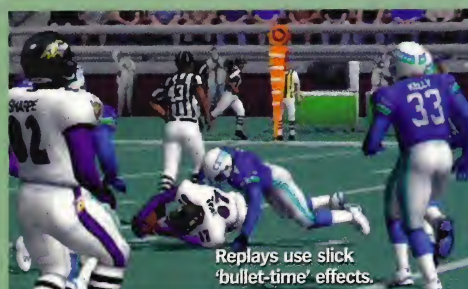
- Addictive gameplay
- Many new features
- Better than SSX Tricky!

Why we'd leave it:

- It'll make all your other games look bad
- It'll ruin your social life

09

PlayStation 2 VERDICT



Replays use slick 'bullet-time' effects.



It's the most in-depth and entertaining gridiron sim EVER!

MADDEN NFL 2002

Every year Madden has a tinker with his odd-shaped sim ball.

Publisher: EA Sports Developer: EA Sports Price: £44.99 Players: 1-4

With its incredibly realistic gameplay and host of dynamic new features, Madden NFL 2002 truly backs up EA's far-fetched claim: 'if it's in the game, it's in the game'. Take Easy Play, for example. If your knowledge of American football is nil or somewhat hazy after the constant schedule shuffling of the TV coverage, then this new mode strips all the unnecessary complications out of the game and lets you get straight down to choosing simplified strategies with which to drive your padded posse forwards. If you should require further nurturing in this full-blooded contact sport then Big John is on hand to coach you through the rules and strategies in another new mode called Coach's Corner.

EA Sports knows that this is the only American football game you'll need and has gone to great lengths to ensure that it will last you until the next Instalment ships. Aside from the numerous game modes and the vastly improved animations (helmets flying off everywhere, etc) there are the

Madden Cards which are earned by achieving certain feats in the game. There are nearly 500 to collect and they can be used to unlock extra teams and stadia or even as currency to bet on the outcome of matches with friends.

In fact, there is so much content that to truly do it justice it would take a review of War And Peace-like proportions. But suffice to say, Madden NFL 2002 must be applauded for utilising the rich hardware on offer to provide gameplay which is nigh on perfect. ■ Ryan Butt

MADDEN NFL 2002

Why we'd buy it:

- Looks incredible.
- Rammed with options.
- Expert tuition.

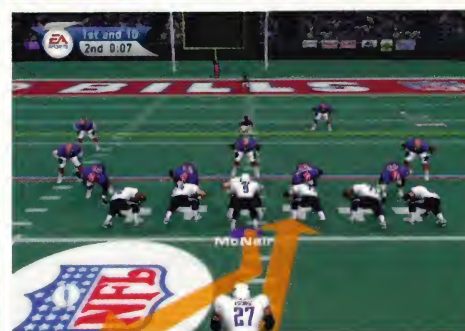
Why we'd leave it:

- Will only appeal to fans.
- Defending is still mind numbingly boring.

09

PlayStation 2 VERDICT

MADDEN NFL 2001



Publisher: EA Developer: EA Sports Price: £19.99 Players: 1-4

EA Sports has transformed its longest running franchise into one of the most dazzling sporting spectacle on the PS2. Even if the ball is the wrong shape. The main problem with American football games of the past has been that they were more engrossing when you're attacking than when defending. Mercifully, Madden NFL 2001 keeps a fluid pace throughout and gives you total control of every aspect of the match. Packed with options, pumped-up with addictive gameplay and draped in outstanding visuals, this game demands respect even from those who don't 'get' US 'football'. ■ RB

MADDEN NFL 2001

Why we'd buy it:

- Extremely thorough.
- Great management.
- New Franchise mode

Why we'd leave it:

- If we hated the sport
- Occasionally the animation falters

08

PlayStation 2 VERDICT

LMA MANAGER 2002

Fed up of Fergie? Angered by Arsene? Beat them at their own game with this polished management sim.



Publisher: **Codemasters** Developer: **Codemasters**
Price: **£39.99** Players: **1-2**

Unarguably the slickest and most playable game of its kind on PSone, *LMA Manager 2002* stakes a strong claim for being the same on PS2. You can choose to take control of a club in one of 16 divisions in six European leagues. And once in the hot seat, you get to fine-tune your team's tactics, conduct training sessions and sift through a transfer market that features 722 clubs and 17,000 players from 28 different countries. *LMA Manager 2002* is vast. Whether you want to guide Stockport County into the playoffs or take Real Madrid to European Cup glory, this is a game that has months of gameplay in it.

What the *LMA* series has always done well is make the menus, stats, facts and figures console-friendly. And there

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
11 Colchester Utd	7	3	1	3	10	7	+3	10
12 Oldham Athletic	7	3	1	3	11	9	+2	10
13 Reading	7	3	1	3	9	7	+2	10
14 Northampton Town	7	3	1	3	11	12	-1	10
15 Wycombe Wanderers	7	3	1	3	5	6	-1	10
16 Cardiff City	7	2	3	2	5	8	+1	9
17 Bournemouth	7	2	3	2	6	10	-2	9
18 Bournemouth	7	2	2	3	6	9	-3	8
19 Bury	7	1	4	2	4	6	-2	7
20 Cambridge Utd	7	2	1	4	5	8	-3	7

are plenty of them. Players are rated in 13 different areas, from tackling and passing to temperament and stamina. Morale also plays a factor and there are injuries to consider. As for tactics, you can use several pre-set formations or create a custom shape, adjusting how high the defence sits up the field, how attack-minded the team is, whether they favour short passes or whether they hoof the ball up-field.

LMA Manager 2002 also features a 3D match feature. And it's far from just a gimmick. As the match unfolds, you can make adjustments to your strategy by shouting preset commands at your players, or pause the game to dip back into the tactics menu. If you don't want to spend five minutes watching each match, the PS2 can generate a result based on the interaction of stats alone.

The game isn't perfect, though. The power-bar method of measuring a player's abilities isn't as precise as a black-and-white stat, so it's often difficult to see whether



one player is better than another. The 3D matches are time-consuming and obviously not up to FIFA standards – there can be some wayward passing and kooky AI decisions.

However, even with all the many features that have been mentioned here, we're just scratching the surface of this massive game. And, at the end of the day (to use a favourite footy phrase), the best thing about *LMA Manager 2002* is that you just can't stop playing it. ■ **Dean Evans**

LMA MANAGER 2002

Why we'd buy it:

- A very slick, very playable management game
- Vast in scope

Why we'd leave it:

- Still not as deep as PC legend Championship Manager



PlayStation 2 **VERDICT**



SMASH COURT TENNIS PRO TOURNAMENT

The best tennis player on the videogame circuit serves a PS2 ace.

Publisher: **SCEE** Developer: **Namco** Price: **£39.99** Players: **1-4**

Slash Court Tennis has grown up. Gone are the super-deformed characters and far-out courts of the PSone versions. In their place are authentic Grand Slam venues and eight tennis superstars – all finely sculpted and sporting their trademark shots and styles. The change is most definitely for the better.

Namco's series has always had a finely tuned engine that recreates every slice, lob, topspin and dropshot from the real sport and adapts them into an easily accessible control method. This in turn enables you to play like a legend within no time at all and place the ball wherever you want. This element is still very much intact and the massive graphical upgrade means that you can now experience tennis that looks as good as it plays.

Of course, it wouldn't be *Smash Court Tennis* without sporting at least some quirkiness, and this comes from the pressure-sensitive joystick buttons. By anticipating where a returned shot is going to land, you can stab the desired shot button inwards and keep it depressed until you're ready to

strike – upon which the ball will transform into a glowing comet and blast over the net like an Exocet missile. Likewise, when a high ball is incoming, a red circle appears under it. Move into this circle and you'll turn green before smacking a raging thunderbolt back at your stunned opponent. Old habits die hard, eh?

The main purpose of the game is to guide one of the eight pros on to Grand Slam victory in four different events: Australian Open, Tournoi De Paris, US Open and Wimbledon. It isn't just a case of lifting the trophy, because rewards are obtained and unlocked by winning the respective title in both the men's and women's categories. Your prizes can be admired in the lavish Trophy Room in which you can also peruse other bonus features you pick up on your travels.

Aside from the Pro Tournament mode, the game also serves up a quick-fire Arcade mode, a neat Time Attack mode plus all the usual exhibition and practice modes that ensure you'll still be coming back for more long after the play-induced blisters on your thumb have burst.

Can nothing put *Smash Court Tennis* off its stroke? Sadly, yes. Try as it might, Namco has failed to solve the old problem of the player at the far end of the court being at an instant disadvantage; stranded at the top of the screen, you can never make up ground as easily as your near-side counterpart. Also, achieving an ace is high on impossible.

As is tradition, *Smash Court Tennis* is at its best with a MultiTap and three other players – although the severe lack of playable characters strips a lot of the unpredictability out of the otherwise excellent experience. It is testament to *Smash Court Tennis*' overall quality, though, that it can suffer such handicaps and still stand head and shoulders above everything else, tennis-wise, on PS2. ■ **Ryan Butt**

SMASH COURT TENNIS PRO TOURNAMENT

Why we'd buy it:

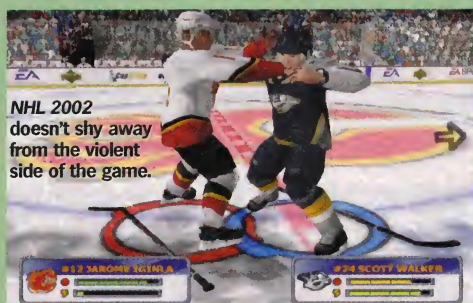
- A great game of tennis
- Looks unbelievably real
- Ace multiplayer gaming

Why we'd leave it:

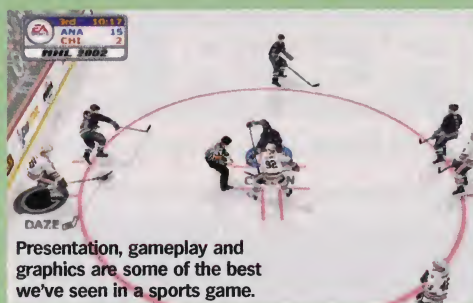
- Not enough characters
- It's virtually impossible to serve an ace



PlayStation 2 **VERDICT**



NHL 2002 doesn't shy away from the violent side of the game.



Presentation, gameplay and graphics are some of the best we've seen in a sports game.

NHL 2002

The sim with more shoulder barging than an OAP jumble sale.

Publisher: EA Sports Developer: EA Sports Canada Price: £39.99 Players: 1-2

Ice hockey is not exactly a national obsession this side of the Atlantic but the fast-paced sport has always made for great videogame fare. It's the combination of frenetic action and simmering violence that does it for us, and probably you too considering the surprising popularity of hockey games.

This is typical EA Sports. 30 NHL teams and 20 International squads are included, accurate down to the most arbitrary stat. The presentation is sheer American TV, with multi-angle replays, cool re-enactments of key moments (complete with emotive, motion-blurred visuals and heartbeat soundtrack) and funny commentary. And, of course, there are the masses of competition modes and options you'd expect from an EA game, including a create-your-own player option – which is always pointless, but always fun if you're amused by building a giant fat bloke with a Hannibal Lecter face mask.

However, the main reason to check out NHL 2002 is its astonishingly fast gameplay. The crisp, motion-captured

players slide, skid and fight their way around the rink at frightening speeds, demanding near subliminal coordination skills. No wonder Jason Lee's character in *Mallrats* preferred to play NHL (admittedly an earlier Mega Drive version) than have sex with Shannon Doherty. The Panini-style NHL cards that you can buy with points earned by completing certain tasks, such as winning ten face-offs in a single period are the icing on the... ice. It's this kind of polish that makes NHL 2002 an improvement over its predecessor. ■ Keith Stuart

NHL 2002

Why we'd buy it:

- Extremely playable
- Fab TV presentation
- Addictive card collecting

Why we'd leave it:

- If you have NHL 2001 and can't afford to upgrade.



PlayStation 2 VERDICT

NHL 2001



Publisher: EA Developer: EA Sports Canada Price: £19.99 Players: 1-2

NHL 2001 is easily the most impressive ice hockey game yet seen. From the commentary, to the visuals, to the movement, to the players, to the bickering of the refs, to the cheering of the crowds, to the cheesy twinkle of the pipe-organ, and the immersive TV-style presentation, everything just smacks of authenticity. In terms of gameplay it's much the same mixture of fluidity and brutality as we'd expect from next-gen ice hockey, with enjoyable scraps complementing the thrilling sporting action. It's so damn hot you expect the ice to steam. ■ KG

NHL 2001

Why we'd buy it:

- Slick and addictive
- It's like Interactive TV
- A half-decade game leap

Why we'd leave it:

- Old-style gameplay
- Don't like ice hockey
- No friends for multiplayer



PlayStation 2 VERDICT

CRICKET 2002



Publisher: EA Sports Developer: EA Sports Price: £39.99 Players: 1-4

EA Sports has captured the essence of cricket superbly. As with the real McCoy, concentration, patience and timing are the key skills. Persistence rewards you with tense, epic showdowns between bat and ball. As you'd expect from EA, there's a wealth of options covering every aspect of international cricket. Play in a ten-over slog-fest, a five-match test series or a World Cup one-day competition. Location, pitch type and weather can all be tweaked and there's a great commentary from Richie Benaud. Overall, a cracking sport sim. ■ NE

CRICKET 2002

Why we'd buy it:

- Looks fantastic
- Extremely accurate sim
- A myriad of options

Why we'd leave it:

- No appeal for non-fans
- Initially tough to get to grips with



PlayStation 2 VERDICT

WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP SNOOKER 2002



Publisher: Codemasters Developer: Blade Interactive Price: £39.99 Players: 1-4

Blade Interactive understands that snooker is a deeply tactical game – that's why this game works so well. With options for single matches as well as tournaments, the game offers over 20 real professional rivals. The cueing system works well: you line up the shot using the ultra precise analogue stick and set the power via a sliding gauge. Ball movement is perfect and the way they react to each other is so fluid you take it for granted. It may show a little too much of the fussy nature of the game, but WCS 2002's ball play is truly second to none. ■ SM

WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP SNOOKER 2002

Why we'd buy it:

- Accurate simulation
- Nice cueing action
- Realistic pro players

Why we'd leave it:

- Slow paced
- Visually sparse
- Won't convert non-fans



PlayStation 2 VERDICT

RUGBY



Publisher: EA Sports Developer: EA Sports Price: £39.99 Players: 1-4

This is a decent, if slightly infuriating simulation of one of the hardest sports to convert to videogame. Creative Assembly has taken ideas from other EA sports titles, particularly *Madden* and introduced 'plays' to aid defence and attack. There are 33 moves in total which are worth learning as, unlike *FIFA*, it's impossible to get by here without total proficiency – at times making the game seem cruel and unenjoyable. Though *Rugby* looks fantastic it also suffers from unresponsive controls on occasion, but give it time and a free-flowing game emerges. ■ TW

RUGBY

Why we'd buy it:

- Best of its kind
- Fast, free-flowing
- Officially licensed

Why we'd leave it:

- Lack of teams
- Annoying camera
- Doozy skill level



PlayStation 2 VERDICT

AGGRESSIVE INLINE



Publisher: **Acclaim** Developer: **Z-Axis**
Price: **£39.99** Players: **1-2**

Anyone who's played a skate or BMX game will be on familiar ground here. Points are awarded for grabs, tricks and spins, activated by a combination of a well-timed takeoff and intricate Joypad button fingering. Importantly, *Aggressive Inline* rewards variety, so landing a weak trick is often better than repeating one big-money manoeuvre. Cut-scenes and rewards keep things interesting while multiplayer options and unlockable characters add to the mix. Playability and personality are always the keys to success and there are no complaints here. ■ **MW**

AGGRESSIVE INLINE

Why we'd buy it:
- It's huge, damn huge
- Chris's skirt and the word 'grinding'

Why we'd leave it:
- Tony Hawk's 3 is better
- Could do with a little more customisation

08PlayStation 2 **VERDICT**

This is the 'Superman'. Not recommended for your local BMX track.



Combinations of the D-pad and shoulder buttons produce spins, flips and tricks. Link 'em together for big points.

MAT HOFFMAN'S PRO BMX 2

Take a road trip with Mat and his biker gang.

Publisher: **Activision 02** Developer: **Rainbow Studios** Price: **£39.99** Players: **1-2**

Mat 'The Condor' Hoffman's first game was basically what everyone expected – Tony Hawk's on bikes – due to a shared game engine. In this second outing, Rainbow Studios, aided by Mat himself, has clearly tried to make the atmosphere and gameplay more specific to the BMX experience.

The most obvious change is the use of a real-life road trip as a narrative device. A bunch of the world's best BMX-ers were packed off into a big yellow bus and filmed at a variety of locations doing their thang. Hoffman's crew are all playable – fill up the adrenaline meter by pulling off tricks and they have their own special moves.

The game's major mode, Road Trip, is set over eight real city-based levels – Oklahoma, New Orleans, Vegas, etc – and progress depends on completing a variety of bike-related challenges and accumulating points. Challenges range from the bizarre (collect poodles in LA) to the insane (grind the tentacles of a giant squid) although locating these on the

larger levels can be frustrating. As with all games of this genre, *Pro BMX 2* is packed with Park Editor, Freeride and Multiplayer modes, but the most exciting addition is the Flatlands mode where you try the tricky ballet-like moves BMX-ers perform when they're not on ramps. Most tricks are customisable, although the controls can be a little fiddly at times.

Minor control niggles aside, *Pro BMX 2* will give good bike if you have the patience to practise. ■ **Mark Wyatt**

MAT HOFFMAN'S PRO BMX 2

Why we'd buy it:
- Gives a real flavour of the sport
- Fun and challenging

Why we'd leave it:
- Frustrating and fiddly at times

07PlayStation 2 **VERDICT**

Take out the Corporation heavies with your deadly stunt attacks.



Five quality multiplayer games increase the longevity.

AIRBLADE

Forget bunny hops, it's time to somersault from tall buildings!

Publisher: **SCEE** Developer: **Criterion** Price: **£39.99** Players: **1-2**

Set in a world of anti-gravity propulsion and expansive cityscapes, *AirBlade* puts you in charge of Ethan Palmer, a laid-back courier with a penchant for traffic violations. Ethan is reluctantly drawn into conflict with the sinister GCP Corporation when his flatmate, Oscar Renton is kidnapped.

The Story mode provides a series of mission objectives you must overcome, by performing several set-piece tricks before the clock runs down. On level one you have to take out GCP guards by 'tricking' into them, then find the bad guys' limousine and grind off it, destroying it in the process, before riding up high to take out some snipers. Performing tricks and combos fills up your *AirBlade*'s Boost Gauge, which can be used for a speed injection, or to jump further.

This mode is quirky and fun but it does have some drawbacks. Chiefly, since mission objectives are revealed in chronological order and you have to work out the optimal route, you'll frequently be forced to play levels several times.

You also have little time for experimentation. So it's just as well that the game also includes numerous other modes to flesh out the experience. As well as a Freestyle mode there's the Score Attack and the unlockable Stunt Attack options.

The controls are familiar, but it's the hyperbolic stunts and well-crafted environments that stand out. Plus, the unique propulsion system means there's bigger air, longer grinds, and more acrobatic tricks and combos than *AirBlade*'s more earthbound rivals. ■ **Dave McCarthy**

AIRBLADE

Why we'd buy it:
- Nice anti-grav handling
- Opulent visuals
- Good multiplayer support

Why we'd leave it:
- Too much repetition
- Poor voice acting

08PlayStation 2 **VERDICT**

NFL QUARTERBACK CLUB 2002



Publisher: **Acclaim** Developer: **Acclaim Studios Austin**
Price: **£39.99** Players: **1-4**

Aside from being a hugely playable sim, *Quarterback Club* has some original features that make it stand out from the crowd. Quarterback Challenge mode is a sub-game in which you tackle a series of novel events for supremacy against fellow pros. Another good feature is the three-step Defensive Play editor as it makes defending a little bit more interesting. As solidly as it plays, *Quarterback Club* lacks the spectacular presentation and assured enjoyment of *Madden NFL 2002*, but its quality original features mean there is little to separate the two. ■ **RB**

NFL QUARTERBACK CLUB 2002

Why we'd buy it:
- Some good original features
- Instantly accessible

Why we'd leave it:
- More for hardcore fans
- Doesn't have the Madden pizzazz

08PlayStation 2 **VERDICT**



Rio powers in the header and puts England through to the final. Hurrah!



The fancy power bar is typical of ISS 2's arcade-style approach.

ISS 2

Arcade-style knockabout action from Konami's 'other' football game.

Publisher: Konami Developer: KCE OSA Price: £39.99 Players: 1-4

Judging by our constant drooling over *Pro Evolution Soccer* you may wonder just why you should play any other football game. Well, if you like your pixellated footy on the cheesy side, *ISS 2* will be right down your flank. While *Pro Evo* is the ultimate sim, its sister title is an arcade-style player with enough flashes of pick-up-and-play brilliance to please everyone.

This is a different type of football game. Elements of cheeky action, such as the over-the-top shooting animation and the goalkeeper's repertoire of parries are typical of the arcade feel. A sense of intensity is maintained by a strong imperative to attack, as pacy play complements easy passing. Sadly, most scoring chances are generated by crossing from the by-line or by lashing the ball at the keeper who inevitably spills it to your on-rushing attacker.

Unfortunately, some major niggles mean you never feel fully in control of your players. When the ball is destined for your opponent, or a team-mate, it's nigh-on impossible to

make an interception. Player swapping can be nightmarish too and the ball physics are less than convincing.

Overall though, *ISS 2* succeeds in out-classing most footy offerings. However, *Pro Evolution Soccer* also allows you to play suicidal football and lets you spray the ball around with astonishing realism if you prefer. Our advice: buy PES. If you've already got it, be warned, *ISS 2* is a decent diversion but its basic gameplay means you'll soon be back playing the undisputed football champion. ■ Lee Hall

ISS 2

Why we'd buy it:

- Satisfying fouls
- A decent arcade alternative to PES

Why we'd leave it:

- The ball physics can prove frustrating
- Not much depth

07

PlayStation 2 VERDICT

ISS



Publisher: Konami Developer: KCE OSA Price: £19.99 Players: 1-4

An arcade-based, goal-laden affair, that beats *FIFA* at its own game. *ISS* mixes the instant gratification of the N64 *ISS* titles with the realism and depth of PSone's *ISS Evolution* – the best of both worlds, in other words. The beauty of *ISS* is that it's both instantly accessible and it's a game in which, as with the real thing, you improve with every match. Although it has since been surpassed by both its sequel (see left) and the peerless *Pro Evolution Soccer*, *ISS* remains an extremely enjoyable game and is well worth a look at the new £20 price tag. ■ LH

ISS

Why we'd buy it:

- Happy medium between immediacy and depth
- Well paced and judged

Why we'd leave it:

- Atrocious commentary
- Unwieldy animation
- Shrieking fan in crowd

08

PlayStation 2 VERDICT

FIFA 2002



Publisher: EA Sports Developer: EA Sports Canada Price: £44.99 Players: 1-8

While many details have been tweaked (ever more impressive commentary, better passing), the old *FIFA* niggles refuse to disappear. It's impossible to dispossess the computer. In harder modes, too easy to get away with horrific sliding tackles and, worst of all, players are 'ejected' rather than sent off (the game was made in Canada). *FIFA 2002* is perfectly playable and the new passing style leads to more expressive games. But while EA continues to trade on brand recognition, serious footy game fans will get far more out of *Pro Evolution Soccer*. ■ AL

FIFA 2002

Why we'd buy it:

- New improved passing
- Cozy and accessible
- John Motson commentary

Why we'd leave it:

- Soulless feel
- *Pro Evolution* is better

07

PlayStation 2 VERDICT

UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE SEASON 2001/2002



Publisher: Take 2 Developer: Silicon Dreams Price: £39.99 Players: 1-8

This would have made for a compelling buy had it not been marred by some schoolboy errors. For example, you have complete freedom to weight your passes using an effective power bar system but if you want to take a snap shot then the power bars prove too restrictive. Likewise, the animation, for the most part, is great but too often you'll be in the midst of some lavish move while the opposition runs off with the ball. Despite these downers, *UEFA* is an enjoyable game but it needs to perform more consistently to challenge for honours. ■ RB

UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE SEASON 01/02

Why we'd buy it:

- Plays a good game of footy
- Decent commentary from ITV's Guy Mowbray

Why we'd leave it:

- Not as free-flowing as it should be
- The player AI is suspect

07

PlayStation 2 VERDICT

TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 2002



Publisher: EA Sports Developer: EA Sports Price: £39.99 Players: 1-4

The biggest draw of this latest *Tiger* game is the superb analogue control method. You simply draw back your club by pulling down and strike by pushing forward in one fluid movement of the stick. It feels about as realistic as a golf game can get. All the usual array of option and modes are here. But on the down side, the commentary is repetitive and the AI is a little skewed, with opponents sometimes messing up easy shots and sinking impossible ones. Overall, though, *Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2002* is the finest golf game out there. ■ LH

TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 2002

Why we'd buy it:

- Ace swing control method
- Tons of multiplayer fun and a nifty Career mode

Why we'd leave it:

- Cheesy voice-over and dodgy commentary
- Slightly iffy opponent AI

07

PlayStation 2 VERDICT

MX SUPERFLY

Publisher: **THQ** Developer: **Pacific Coast Power and Light**
Price: **£39.99** Players: **1-2**

MX Superfly packs in huge leaps and motocross mud scrambles yet still retains an element of real-world bike dynamics. Novices will be surprised at the amount of tricks you can pull off via the pressure sensitive combo system, and the 22 sprawling tracks have been designed to give you ample opportunity to show off as many as possible. The physics feel a little 'floaty' and there's a lack of real speed but the framerate is smooth and the controls are responsive. Boasting several play modes and a track editor, MX Superfly is enormous, long-lasting fun. ■ **IH**

MX SUPERFLY**Why we'd buy it:**

- Super slides and ace scenery
- Tons of tricks

Why we'd leave it:

- Not very fast
- Doesn't feel like you're racing

07PlayStation 2 **VERDICT****MIKE TYSON HEAVYWEIGHT BOXING**

Publisher: **Codemasters** Developer: **Codemasters**
Price: **£39.99** Players: **1-2**

Like PSone's Prince Naseem Boxing, MTHB blends elements from both the sim-orientated Knockout Kings and the over-the-top Ready 2 Rumble. The main thrust is the Title Belt option and this is where the wealth of game modes and hidden characters (each with their own styles) can be unlocked – the ultimate competitor being Mad Mike himself. MTHB handles pleasingly well and features a well-designed interface that encourages tactical play through varied and well-timed punching. It's a rounded and entertaining box-'em-up. ■ **OH**

MIKE TYSON HEAVYWEIGHT BOXING**Why we'd buy it:**

- Accessible yet deep fighting system
- Plenty to keep you busy

Why we'd leave it:

- Can't play as Tyson at the start of game
- Does get quite repetitive

07PlayStation 2 **VERDICT****KNOCKOUT KINGS 2002**

Publisher: **EA Sports** Developer: **EA Sports**
Price: **£39.99** Players: **1-2**

Previous incarnations have been little more than button-bashing slugfests but Knockout Kings 2002 bucks the trend with a quality range of boxers, improved game dynamics and a variety of real-life arenas. Your arsenal includes basic left-jab, straight-right, left-hook and right-hook, but shoulder buttons transform these into upper cuts or crafty low blows. It's a simple yet deep system. Other than a predictable disqualification system and the dominance of Muhammad Ali, Knockout Kings 2002 is an involving and enjoyable game. ■ **RC**

KNOCKOUT KINGS 2002**Why we'd buy it:**

- A boxing sim without a glass chin
- Takes months to master

Why we'd leave it:

- Frustrating if one opponent keeps on busting your ass

07PlayStation 2 **VERDICT****SPLASHDOWN**

Publisher: **Infogrames** Developer: **Rainbow Studios**
Price: **£39.99** Players: **1-2**

Woah! New gaming experience. It actually feels like your jet craft is buoyant, bobbing up and down with the same dynamics as it would in real life. The handling is directly affected by waves and wake causing you to lose balance or speed and forcing you to adjust direction. Sadly, gameplay can become monotonous as practice laps force you to replay tracks over and over. Some of the circuit design is uninspired, too. While the water is undeniably impressive, the gaming element is a bit lacking. This is more of a fast-moving stream than a raging torrent. ■ **GW**

SPLASHDOWN**Why we'd buy it:**

- To experience the water
- It's the PS2's best water-based racer

Why we'd leave it:

- Uninspiring gaming
- Monotonous tracks
- Odd AI

07PlayStation 2 **VERDICT****DAVE MIRRA FREESTYLE BMX 2**

Publisher: **Acclaim** Developer: **Z-Axis**
Price: **£39.99** Players: **1-2**

Z-Axis has fused power with playability to make Dave Mirra Freestyle BMX 2 the best bike-'em-up yet. Central to this success is the innovative trick modifier system that allows stunts to be joined into new moves rather than merely chained together. The eight playing areas are impressively vast and full of interactive elements such as traffic, other BMXers and pedestrians. A lazy game camera causes a few problems on certain locations, but overall this is an involving well-designed and inventive BMX stunt-fest. ■ **AC**

DAVE MIRRA FREESTYLE BMX 2**Why we'd buy it:**

- Inventive array of tricks
- Numerous and varied challenges

Why we'd leave it:

- That nonchalant camera
- The occasional collision error

07PlayStation 2 **VERDICT****THIS IS FOOTBALL 2002**

Publisher: **SCEE** Developer: **Team SoHo**
Price: **£19.99** Players: **1-8**

This is an engaging, if slightly flawed, kickabout. The passing game is tight, with some neat lobbed one-twos and delicate withheld through-balls. Defences won't succumb to repetitive tactics, so you'll have to wait for the darting runs of your team-mates. Sadly, though, the finer skills feel redundant: the shoulder buttons activate a variety of tricks, but it's almost impossible to beat a player one-on-one. Gameplay takes a few FIFA-style liberties with realism, but matches are eventful resulting in an entertaining arcade-style footy sim. ■ **GW**

THIS IS FOOTBALL 2002**Why we'd buy it:**

- Accurate teams and player likenesses
- Rewarding gameplay

Why we'd leave it:

- The learning curve isn't that steep
- Ball movement looks odd

07PlayStation 2 **VERDICT**

SPORTS ROUND-UP

This is, quite literally, the World of Sport. But without Dickie Davis and a catchy theme tune.



ALL-STAR BASEBALL 2003: FEATURING DEREK JETER

■ Acclaim ■ £39.99 ■ 1-4 players
Fun, realistic baseball sim, with slick presentation and a decent tactical challenge. Oh, and Derek Jeter!
Score: 07



ALL-STAR BASEBALL 2002

■ Acclaim ■ £34.99 ■ 1-2 players
Approachable baseball game which puts the emphasis on action rather than reams of impenetrable stats. Unlike the real thing.
Score: 07



SLAM TENNIS

■ Infogrames ■ £39.99 ■ 1-4 players
Earnest tennis sim offering a good range of options and a decent representation of the sport. Not up to Smash Court Tennis standards, though.
Score: 07



2002 FIFA WORLD CUP

■ EA Sports ■ £39.99 ■ 1-8 players
Typically flashy EA football title that's virtually identical – in terms of gameplay – to FIFA 2002. Looks the part but lacks the depth of Pro Evo.
Score: 06



FIFA 2001

■ EA Sports ■ £39.99 ■ 1-4 players
A real entry level footy sim with simple controls and easily accessible special moves, but none of the subtlety or range of, yes, Pro Evolution Soccer.
Score: 06



NBA LIVE 2002

■ EA Sports ■ £39.99 ■ 1-4 players
PS2's best basketball sim has all the realism and options you'd expect but lacks the playability of top sports games like Pro Evo and Smash Court Tennis.
Score: 06



NBA LIVE 2001

■ EA Sports ■ £39.99 ■ 1-4 players
Proficient hoops sim with realistic player animation and loads of moves and modes. Typically, though, it's all a little soulless and derivative.
Score: 06



NBA STREET

■ EA Sports ■ £39.99 ■ 1-2 players
Urban-themed 'extreme' b-ball action from EA's BIG collective. They've gone for an arcade feel and the result is fun but basic, shortlived fun.
Score: 06



LE TOUR DE FRANCE

■ Konami ■ £39.99 ■ 1-2 players
The only bicycle racer on PS2 offers a tactical mix of speed and stamina maintenance. It's interesting (if you like bikes) but there aren't enough courses.
Score: 05



SHAUN PALMER'S PRO SNOWBOARDER

■ Activision ■ £44.99 ■ 1-2 players
The simple gameplay and rudimentary controls are from a bygone era, before SSX. It's reasonably playable, though.
Score: 06



HIGH HEAT MAJOR LEAGUE BASEBALL 2003

■ 3DO ■ £39.99 ■ 1-2 players
A decent enough, arcade-style baseball sim filled with customising options. The visuals are horrible, though.
Score: 06



ESPN WINTER X GAMES SNOWBOARDING

■ Konami ■ £44.99 ■ 1-5 players
Very sober and un-'Extreme' snowboarder boasting admirable realism but terrible controls.
Score: 06



ESPN NATIONAL HOCKEY NIGHT

■ Konami ■ £39.99 ■ 1-4 players
Atmospheric but tricky to control hockey action that slips and falls far short of EA's NHL franchise.
Score: 06



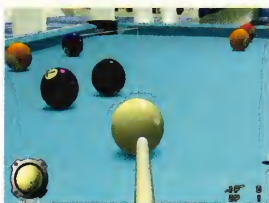
NHL HITZ 2002

■ Midway ■ £39.99 ■ 1-4 players
Founded on aggression, persistence and speed, rather than depth or skill. Which means momentary fun rather than long-term challenge.
Score: 06



ESPN NBA 2NIGHT

■ Konami ■ £39.99 ■ 1-8 players
The latest Konami basketball romp is visually impressive but far too easy. Forget the single player and take on some mates to get anything out of it.
Score: 06



POOLMASTER

■ Take 2 ■ £39.99 ■ 1-2 players
A rudimentary pool sim with the scrappy, uneven feel of the average beer-stained pub table. The ball physics are more reliable, though.
Score: 05



DARK SUMMIT

■ THQ ■ £39.99 ■ 1-2 players
Bizarre mix of snowboarding sim and action adventure. It's a good idea but the visuals are poor and the mission format is deeply frustrating.
Score: 05



TOP ANGLER 2

■ Xicat ■ £39.99 ■ 1 player
As decent-as-they-come fish-'em-up with lot's of game modes, varied locations and challenging rod action. Not everyone's box of maggots.
Score: 05



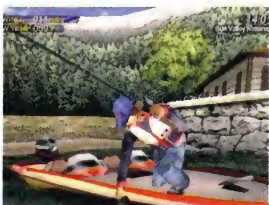
G1 JOCKEY

■ THQ ■ £39.99 ■ 1-8 players
Unusual horse racing sim with an unfortunate emphasis on pre-race stats and tactics. The galloping is reasonably good fun once you get to it.
Score: 05



ESPN X GAMES SKATEBOARDING

■ Konami ■ £39.99 ■ 1-2 players
Scrappy first generation PS2 skater filled with jagged lines and pop-up. The board is difficult to direct, too.
Score: 05



BASS STRIKE

■ THQ ■ £39.99 ■ 1 player
Fishy-smelling bass catching game which suffers due to lack of novelty rod peripheral. You sit, cast, wait and once in a while get a bite. Zzzzzz.
Score: 04



H30 SURFING

■ Take 2 ■ £39.99 ■ 1-2 players
Stupidly over-complicated surfing sim, that's further drenched by a poor camera. It's a shame as there was potential here for a decent surf-'em-up.
Score: 04



SUNNY GARCIA SURFING

■ Ubi Soft ■ £29.99 ■ 1-8 players
A very basic surfer, clearly resting on its license and hoping no one notices the dull visuals and annoying, random-objects-float-to-surface feature.
Score: 03



JEREMY McGRATH SUPERCROSS WORLD

■ Acclaim ■ £39.99 ■ 1-2 players
25 tracks and 24 different stunts, but the terminally unresponsive bike handles like a wet kipper on wheels.
Score: 03



SWING AWAY GOLF

■ EA ■ £39.99 ■ 1-4 players
This is achingly slow, even for a golf sim and the computer characters are utterly annoying – possibly quite realistic, as they are golf fanatics.
Score: 03



REDCARD

■ Midway ■ £39.99 ■ 1-2 players
Arcade-style footy romp with the emphasis on super speed and harsh tackles. Initially great fun in two-player, but the appeal soon wanes.
Score: 05



FREESTYLE

■ EA Sports ■ £39.99 ■ 1-2 players
Frustrating motocross game with nice visuals and good speed, but completely unfair opponent AI and over-difficult progression system.
Score: 05



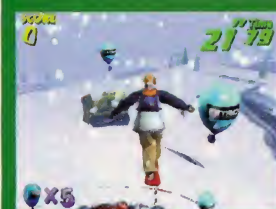
ESPN NBA 2NIGHT 2002

■ Konami ■ £34.99 ■ 1-8 players
A decent and good-looking attempt at a sensible sim is let down by fiddly controls which put the really clever moves out of the reach of most players.
Score: 05



ESPN X GAMES SNOWBOARDING 2002

■ Konami ■ £39.99 ■ 1-2 players
Offers real competitors and decent tricks, but the graphics have more 'pop-up' than a teenage boy.
Score: 04



SKY SURFER

■ Virgin ■ £39.99 ■ 1 player
Clumsy and frustrating freestyle parachuting sim with limited boards and riders, and less depth than a supermodel's autobiography.
Score: 03



TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 2001

■ EA Sports ■ £39.99 ■ 1-4 players
EA in Innovation shocker! Yep, the new swing control method is tops, even if the AI and commentary are dodgy.
Score: 06



MX RIDER

■ Infogrames ■ £39.99 ■ 1-2 players
Speedy and fun motocross sim with exciting handling and loads of options. The visuals are pretty basic, though, and the camera is unhelpful.
Score: 05



ESPN INTERNATIONAL WINTER SPORTS

■ Konami ■ £39.99 ■ 1-2 players
More button hammering action from Konami, but there aren't enough events and our fingers are getting tired.
Score: 05



DAVID BECKHAM SOCCER

■ Rage ■ £39.99 ■ 1-4 player
Beckham himself doesn't suffer from implausible pace problems and an inept control system, so why should his licensed game? Looks awful, too.
Score: 04



LAKE MASTERS EX

■ Midas ■ £14.99 ■ 1 player
Spectacularly dull angler with boring tournament mode and comatose fish. This is a cheap game in every sense of the word.
Score: 02



ESPN INTERNATIONAL TRACK & FIELD

■ Konami ■ £39.99 ■ 1-4 players
Classic button-bashing athletics action that may confuse and disorientate modern gamers with slow fingers.
Score: 05



SIR ALEX FERGUSON'S PLAYER MANAGER 2002

■ 3DO ■ £39.99 ■ 1 player
Easy to get into and comprehensive management sim, but it's all too logical, making winning straightforward.
Score: 05



SVEN GORAN ERIKSSON'S WORLD MANAGER

■ 3DO ■ £19.99 ■ 1 player
Another licensed, entry-level management game from the 3DO/Anco collective. Too lightweight for most.
Score: 05



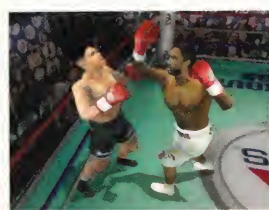
CENTRE COURT: HARD HITTER

■ Midas ■ £29.99 ■ 1-4 players
Budget tennis game with few options, basic gameplay and no real players. Cheap and not particularly cheerful.
Score: 04



UEFA CHALLENGE

■ Infogrames ■ £39.99 ■ 1-4 players
Atrocious football sim with sluggish controls, jerky animation and near-surreal lack of communication between team-mates. Avoid.
Score: 02



KNOCKOUT KINGS 2001

■ EA Sports ■ £39.99 ■ 1-2 players
Decent-enough boxing sim with famous fighters and plenty of options. The basic gameplay and sluggish controls let it down.
Score: 05



JET SKI RIDERS

■ Eidos ■ £39.99 ■ 1-2 players
Unconvincing water physics and jerky handling mar this instantly playable water-based racer.
Score: 05



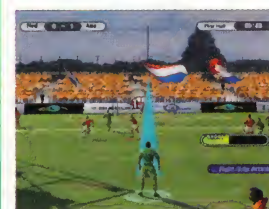
LEGO FOOTBALL MANIA

■ Lego ■ £29.99 ■ 1-4 players
Kiddie footy action with amusing power-ups aplenty and very easy controls. But if you are over twelve, this is less appealing than Fireman Sam.
Score: 05



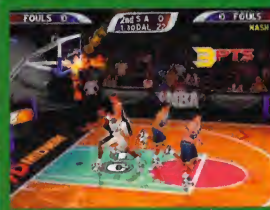
NEXT GENERATION TENNIS

■ Wanadoo ■ £29.99 ■ 1-4 players
Ten licensed players (Inc. Henman!) and 17 courts add credibility to this sim, but the terribly unresponsive controls take it away again.
Score: 04



INTERNATIONAL LEAGUE SOCCER

■ Eon Digital ■ £39.99 ■ 1-2 players
Another steaming cow pat of a footy game with poor AI, terrible collision detection and glitchy visuals.
Score: 02



NBA HOOPZ

■ Midway ■ £39.99 ■ 1-6 players
Typically action-orientated arcade b-ball from Midway. Easy to get into and huge fun for two players, but the lack of options means it won't last.
Score: 05



TRANSWORLD SURF

■ Infogrames ■ £39.99 ■ 1-4 players
Adequately replicates wave riding, but lacks the exploration aspect of, say, Tony Hawk's, and interaction with the water isn't very convincing.
Score: 06



SALT LAKE 2002

■ Eidos ■ £39.99 ■ 1-4 players
The visuals and physics are spot-on, but Salt Lake is criminally short on events. It's over quicker than a British Winter Olympics challenge.
Score: 05



JONNY MOSELEY MAD TRIX

■ 3DO ■ £29.99 ■ 1-2 players
Yes, it's the almost inevitable extreme skiing game. Could have been okay if it wasn't for the dull visuals and boring tricks. Stick to snowboarding.
Score: 04



SVEN GORAN ERIKSSON'S WORLD CHALLENGE

■ 3DO ■ £34.99 ■ 1-2 players
As ineffectual and unconvincing as England's second half performance against... Well, anyone.
Score: 01

PICK 'N MIX

A tantalising lucky dip of uncatagorisable gaming treats, featuring gangland violence, herding, photography, helicopter rescue, pinball and, erm, sucking the legs of young ladies...



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FREAK OUT

CITY CRISIS

RAYMAN M

ROBOT WARS

AKIRA PSYCHOBALL



GRAND THEFT AUTO III

Climbing the treacherous ladder of crime proves irresistible in Rockstar's epic of murder, debauchery and questionable driving.

Publisher: Rockstar Developer: DMA Design
Price: £39.99 Players: 1

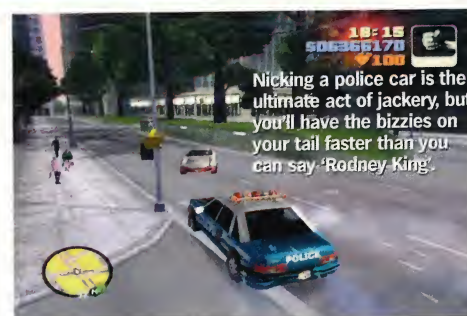
Finally, the godfather of the urban action game comes of age. *Grand Theft Auto III* takes a series popular for its brazen controversy and free-roaming gameplay and, by adding a third dimension, transforms it into a *Scarface* for the digital generation. It's fouler, filthier and more felonious than ever before; an ultraviolent cartoon of epic scale.

Anyone familiar with previous *GTA* games will recognise the gameplay dynamics. Hauling hapless motorists from the

wheel of any vehicle, you can then bomb around at high speeds in your hi-jacked vessel, flattening pedestrians and causing multiple pile-ups. Evading police attention, you're given the opportunity to hook up with the local Mafia – who love a keen young go-getter unfazed by whacking a few mooks and packing them off to sleep with the fishes.

GTAIII's biggest triumph is the construction of the living breathing, 24-hour 3D city. Wandering the streets, you pass through distinct districts, from Chinatown to the upmarket Hepburn Heights, all packed with people going about their daily business. In the beginning, it all seems civilised, but as night falls out come the pimps, the punks, the pushers and the hookers, and it soon becomes clear that Liberty City is a haven of vice and iniquity.

At first you can amuse yourself for hours



by simply causing chaos: nicking cars, trading them for enough cash to buy an Uzi, carrying out a few drive-by shootings for a laugh. Once you realise exactly what you can get away with, the game opens up and allows you to get on with fashioning a criminal career. Auto-based missions are as good as anything in *Reflections'* *Driver* games. Tailing your quarry at top speeds through crowded city streets while a police squad resorts to kamikaze tactics to take you down, is one of gaming's greatest thrills.

Following the branching mission structure puts you in touch with all kinds of high-flying lowlife, from the Mafia to the Yakuza, from bent cops to Colombian drug lords. Each step up the ladder means an opportunity to wreak havoc in an ever more impressive manner. There are sniper battles, speedboat chases, precinct shootouts and police massacres, like playing through a half century of action movies. The over-arching story is immense, but there's always an opportunity to take part in impromptu rampage for points, or just run a few taxi missions for a breather.

Despite minor grumbles about the shot targeting system and the repetition involved in constant visits to casualty and the cop shop, *GTAIII* is an irresistible purchase. Crime always pays. ■ Sam Richards



// *Grand Theft Auto III*'s triumph is the construction of the living, breathing 24-hour 3D city //

GANG BANGING They say there's only one way out of the Mafia: you either die or you get whacked. But you're a one-man crimewave and you can work for whoever you want...



THE MAFIA

Your first initiation into *GTAIII*'s gangland is via small-time pimp Luigi and his inept hustlers. They're too embroiled in a turf war with the Triads to be big league. Mafia Don Salvatore Leone may have the plush suit, but does he have the ba-da-bing ba-da-boom?



THE DIABLOS

A Hispanic street gang run by fat gang-banger El Burro. Obsessed with lowriders, the Diablos aren't going to get far in the world on their crappy porn business, particularly when El Burro seems to be a little too fond of his own pet donkey for comfort.



THE TRIADS

Using a Chinese laundry and a fish-filleting factory as fronts for all kinds of illegal business, the Triads are desperate to expand from their Chinatown base. They make up in numbers what they lack in firepower, but don't have the cachet of the Mafia or the Yakuza.



THE CARTEL

Colombian roots see this clan controlling the import and distribution of Liberty City's drugs. With other gangs desperate to wrestle control of their lucrative drug runs, The Cartel's fame may not last, but if they're going out, they're going out with a bang.



THE MEDIA EMPIRE

So who is the biggest gangster of them all? Surely not Donald Love, the silver-tongued media tycoon. With interests in global communications, life insurance, arms deals and intelligence systems he seems like a perfectly legit businessman to us...

GRAND THEFT AUTO III

Why we'd buy it:
- You get away with murder
- Vast number of missions in huge gameworld

Why we'd leave it:
- Repetitive at times
- Shooting dynamics are suspect

08

PlayStation 2 VERDICT

Gromps are huge pink bears that eat any creature they find. Keep them away from your herds!

HERDY GERDY

Behold! The first ever videogame version of *One Man And His Dog...*

Publisher: Eidos Developer: Core Design Price: £44.99 Players: 1

What is *Herdy Gerdy*? It has some ledge-leaping elements, but it's not a platform game. It boasts hero-hating enemies, but there isn't any combat. There are locked doors, yet there are no obvious keys to open them. You could say that this quirky 3D romp is simply about herding groups of cartoon animals into small enclosures. But *Herdy Gerdy* is more than just a shepherd simulator. It's a series of inventive and organic puzzles that are often beautifully and superbly realised.

The story takes place on an island created long ago by the Elders using the power of the First Acorn – which has been procured by an evil character named Sadorf. Taking control of Gerdy, your task is to reach a special herding tournament, defeat Sadorf and win back the First Acorn. In game terms, this lengthy quest translates to over 30 levels of object collection and animal herding. Each of the levels has its own delicately balanced ecosystem and is populated by an array of different creatures each with their own unique



characteristics. These must be herded into their specific animal pens using a range of unlockable tools and magic items. Herd enough and you unlock a new level, bringing you a step closer to reaching Tournament Island.

Herdy Gerdy fuses high-quality visuals with a unique style of gameplay. Although things do get repetitive, the package is packed with hidden extras, mini-puzzles and neat platform elements across varying terrains, all arranged in a refreshingly non-linear structure. ■ Dean Evans

HERDY GERDY

Why we'd buy it:
- Originality
- Superb visuals, sound and attention to detail

Why we'd leave it:
- The gameplay is perhaps a little too repetitive

08

PlayStation 2 VERDICT

SKY ODYSSEY



Publisher: SCEI Developer: Cross/SCEI
Price: £39.99 Players: 1

Sky Odyssey is a one-player flight sim without a single enemy to destroy and no weapons even if there were. There are five distinct modes, but the main pull is Adventure. Choosing from an initial three planes (biplane, customised WWII fighter or early pulse jet) you're invited to take on an ever-more-difficult range of missions that put your flying skills to the ultimate test. Controls are relatively simple but require agility and skill, with each plane handling differently depending on type, modifications and above all, the weather. Surprisingly rich and original. ■ PF

SKY ODYSSEY

Why we'd buy it:
- Ridiculously playable
- Imaginative missions
- Skywriting is fun

Why we'd leave it:
- If you want weapons
- Needs a two-player target mode

08

PlayStation 2 VERDICT

POLAROID PETE



Publisher: JVC Developer: Irem
Price: £29.99 Players: 1

The 'Pete' of the title is press photographer Pete Goldman, who must take a series of snaps for The Planet Times. This involves tip-toeing around a bizarre comic landscape hitting the right buttons at the right times to catch the right snaps. Shooting gets increasingly frantic as you progress – capturing a grinning child with proud parents gets 100 points, but loitering in the public baths for a shot of a disrobed gent will score more. It's crazy, funny and smothered in badly translated 'English', but has less repeat appeal than your older sister's wedding photos. ■ SC

POLAROID PETE

Why we'd buy it:
- For five-minute gaming
- There's always something new to discover

Why we'd leave it:
- No lasting appeal
- Shutter shooting takes some adjusting to

07

PlayStation 2 VERDICT



MR MOSKEETO

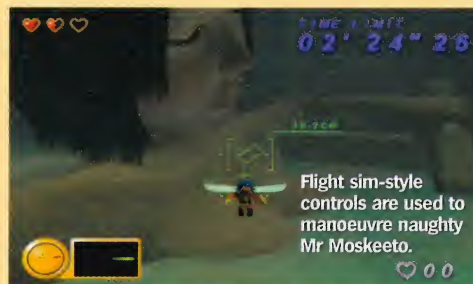
Once bitten, forever smitten? Or just vaguely interested?

Publisher: Eidos (Fresh Games) Developer: SCEI Price: £39.99 Players: 1-2

If you've ever been the subject of a series of mosquito bites you'll know just how unpleasant these insects really are. But not *Mr Moskeeto* – he's a cute cartoon mossie and the real enemy is the Yamada family that keep interrupting him as he goes about his business sucking their blood.

The story is simple. *Mr Moskeeto* is bugging the Yamadas big time and as the day gets hotter, the bites become itchy and the tensions rise. The fanged insect is controlled like an aeroplane. You have air brakes, a quick reverse and a dive bomb attack. This is used when a character displays red attack points on patches of bare skin. Fly close enough and you'll lock on, then it's time to get sucking, done by rotating the right analogue stick as fast as you can.

The Yamada family don't just lie there and take it though. They set poisonous incense burners, bug zappers, attack you with insect repellent and chase you around the room. This happens mainly after you've wound them up into a state of



rage that's indicated by their on-screen pulse monitor going into the red zone. Tactics also come into play – turning lights off and switching the stereo on in order to distract them will make your blood sucking easier.

The problem with such a high-concept title is its tendency to become repetitive. Plus, the difficulty setting in the early stages is high enough to put off casual gamers. *Mr Moskeeto* is no essential purchase, but those desperate for something new may wish to be bitten. ■ George Walter

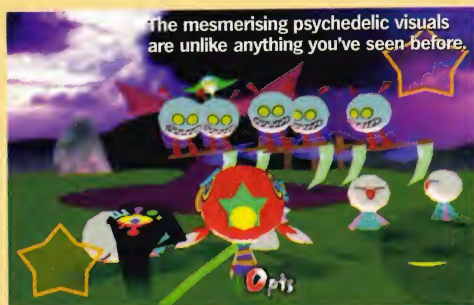
MR MOSKEETO

Why we'd buy it:
- It's brilliantly original
- It's mildly addictive

Why we'd leave it:
- Becomes repetitive
- Dour environments
- The dialogue soon grates

06

PlayStation 2 VERDICT



FREAK OUT

Yet another game about a little girl and her magical neckwear...

Publisher: **Swing!** Developer: **Treasure** Price: **£39.99** Players: **1**

The star of this strange adventure is Linda, a young girl whose sisters have been transformed into hideous creatures and are now inhabiting various strange realms. Linda's task is to defeat the evil spirits controlling her siblings with the help of a magic scarf that can pull and stretch anything it touches. This enables her to launch snap attacks, fire her at enemies, jump long distances and exorcise demons. Hmm.

After an inventive comic book intro sequence, Linda and her scarf plummet into the Museum Of Agony – the hub of the game where players enter doors to different worlds. To enter the boss realms and liberate her sisters, Linda must accumulate points from levels populated by women with enormous breasts. Suitably, these are minions of the demons of vanity. Entering one of the sister's realms will allow Linda to battle it out with a hideous alter ego of her possessed family member – who can be any number of hideous forms including an orbiting satellite or a gelatinous green blob.

Controlling Linda and her scarf independently with the two analogue sticks is ingenious and the way you grab things to pull off special moves is immensely satisfying. On the downside, gameplay can become repetitive and frustrating with what is effectively a succession of boss fights. Oh, and a wayward in-game camera doesn't help your quest. It's certainly not for everyone, but *Freak Out* is definitely worth indulging in if you're after a refreshing and curious addition to your games collection. ■ **Jamie Sefton**

FREAK OUT

Why we'd buy it:
- Utterly bizarre gameplay
- Distinct and impressive cartoon graphics

Why we'd leave it:
- Can become repetitive
- Annoying camera
- Too bonkers for some

07

PlayStation 2 **VERDICT**

CITY CRISIS



Publisher: **Take 2** Developer: **Syscom**
Price: **£44.99** Players: **1**

Chaos reigns and the emergency services are overwhelmed. This city needs a hero in a big chopper. The beautiful game environment and realism here really shouts next-gen plaything. You control your helicopters with the analogue stick and select mission modes from Rescue (put fires out and pick people off rooftops), Chase (track a villain), Time Attack, and Final Rescue (earthquake aftermath). Sadly, the innovation, tight challenges and superior control system are let down by the lack of game – it simply runs out on you. ■ **SF**

CITY CRISIS

Why we'd buy it:
- Beautiful cities
- Control system
- Exciting missions

Why we'd leave it:
- Not long enough
- Strategy sim
- An acquired taste?

06

PlayStation 2 **VERDICT**

RAYMAN M



Publisher: **Ubi Soft** Developer: **Ubi Studios France**
Price: **£39.99** Players: **1**

Rather than going for a straight sequel to *Rayman Revolution*, this game sees Ubi Soft focusing on multiplayer action. Two types of game (Racing and Battle) make up the title's 24 levels, each structured into four leagues, plus a bonus league, and all are unlocked by playing through the single-player game. Leagues offer a mixture of both Racing and Battle levels, with several different modes of play in each. Unfortunately, both gaming styles are pretty dull here and feel compromised forced onto the same disk together. ■ **AL**

RAYMAN M

Why we'd buy it:
- Tons of levels
- Nice cartoon visuals
- Rewards player skill

Why we'd leave it:
- Too slow
- Annoying deathmatches
- You'll lose interest

06

PlayStation 2 **VERDICT**

ROBOT WARS: ARENAS OF DESTRUCTION



Publisher: **BBC Multimedia** Developer: **Climax**
Price: **£39.99** Players: **1-2**

Robot Wars, as a videogame, is aimed at those who fancy having a go but can't be bothered with doing it for real. You create a robot from a number of preset materials – motors, wheels, weapons, frames – then battle it out in a series of different competitions against famous robots from the TV series. It should be entertaining, but it's not. The graphics are dull, bits of your robot fall off bearing no relation to where you've been hit and AI is tuned so that other robots always gang up on you. Stick to the TV show – at least that's got Phillipa Forrester. ■ **GW**

ROBOT WARS: ARENAS OF DESTRUCTION

Why we'd buy it:
- To put Sergeant Bash in his place

Why we'd leave it:
- It's more entertaining to watch on telly

05

PlayStation 2 **VERDICT**

AKIRA PSYCHOBALL



Publisher: **Infogrames** Developer: **AIA**
Price: **£TBC** Players: **1-2**

Based (sort of) on the 1988 anime movie *Akira*, *Psychoball* is a colourful pinball sim packed with increasingly difficult levels. You start on an elementary, *Akira*-themed table and by completing various challenges, such as shooting balls down assigned holes, you unlock new modes and eventually new tables. As an extra reward you'll open *Akira* clips and soundbites as progress is made through the game. But for heaven's sake, this is pinball and surely it has no place on a PS2. It belongs in a pub. And *Akira* deserves better. ■ **MW**

AKIRA PSYCHOBALL

Why we'd buy it:
- Must have all *Akira*-related merchandise

Why we'd leave it:
- Pinball should stay where it belongs: in the pub

03

PlayStation 2 **VERDICT**

So now you know what's already on the shelves, but what about forthcoming PS2 treats? Here's a selection of the finest forty games (in completely random order) due for the remainder of the year and early 2003. Start saving now.

THE TOP 40

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GRAND THEFT AUTO: VICE CITY
SOUL CALIBUR II
PRIMAL
SOCOM: US NAVY SEALS

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METAL GEAR SOLID 2: SUBSTANCE
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COLIN MCRAE RALLY 3
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DEVIL MAY CRY 2
TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 4
ZOE: THE SECOND RUNNER
BROKEN SWORD: SLEEPING DRAGON
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LARA CROFT TOMB RAIDER: THE ANGEL OF DARKNESS
BURNOUT 2: POINT OF IMPACT
RETURN TO CASTLE WOLFENSTEIN
RATCHET & CLANK
RED DEAD REVOLVER

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THE GETAWAY
MUSIC 3
TENCHU III
LANDING IN 2003



GRAND THEFT AUTO: VICE CITY

The crime wave rolls on from the grimy, gritty Liberty City to the hot, sultry Vice City

■ Publisher: Rockstar ■ Developer: DMA Design ■ Out: November



Violence and Hawaiian shirts combine in this ultra-tantalising mix of GTA gameplay and Miami Vice aesthetics.

Get ready to be morally violated: the latest in the bad boy GTA series is on its way. Gone are the gritty streets of Liberty City. Instead, welcome to the palm tree-lined decadence of Vice City – two and a half times bigger than the previous metropolis. This time you play top con Tommy Vercetti (voiced by *GoodFellas* gangster Ray Liotta), recently released from the slammer and looking for action. As usual, gameplay takes in a range of missions and sub-missions, but there will be double the number available in *GTAIII*, and they'll be more free-form and multi-stepped, adding to the non-linear feel. The pedestrian element has been charged up with more passers-by to bully with improved hand-to-hand combat, as well as more interior locations to visit. Driving has been tweaked too. Superior car physics allow you to drive with more verve, but it'll also let the cops shoot out your tyres. Oh and the weapon targeting system – something of a bugbear in *GTAIII* – has been mightily improved for more accurate machine gun slaughter. The marriage of GTA gameplay with the look and feel of Miami is a profound achievement. Add to the mix a massively improved graphics engine, loads of new dialogue and cut-scenes, and a kitsch Eighties soundtrack and you get nostalgia at its most heady and ill-advised. ■



Weapon-play combines with supremely athletic martial arts.

SOUL CALIBUR 2

The best beat-'em-up ever gets a sequel.

■ Publisher: SCEE ■ Developer: Namco
■ Out: Spring 2003

With its pesty characters (lots of leather, short skirts and bustiers – and that was just the men), slick weapons-based combat, super-slick 3D movement and luscious background scenery, *Soul Calibur* on Dreamcast was arguably the finest fighting game ever made. Pity hardly anyone got to play it. For the long-awaited sequel, most of the original cast will be returning, but newcomers Yung Tsung and Cassandra will be replacing Hwang and saucy Greek-goddess Sophitia respectively. Namco is promising more newbies on top of these, but is releasing few details at present. Gameplay-wise, some of the more complicated offensive and defensive moves are being simplified and in-and-out-of-the-screen movement made even easier to access. There will also be a few walls to throw your opponents against, bringing the series in line with the likes of *Dead or Alive 3* and *Tekken 4*. If you've yet to commit to a fighting game series on PS2, this could well be the ultimate contender. ■

PRIMAL

Fantasy fighting fun with one girl and her stone gargoyle...

■ Publisher: SCEE ■ Developer: Studio Cambridge ■ Out: TBC 2003



Facing a market packed with fantasy third-person adventures, Studio Cambridge is trying out a few new ideas with *Primal*. Based in a monster-plagued mythological realm, the game has two lead characters, female adventurer Jen and gargoyle Scree. Both have their own skills and players can switch between them at will to solve puzzles. Central to the action is a hi-tech combat system which mimics the depth of a dedicated beat-'em-up rather than taking the standard bash-button-continuously approach. Jen can also change into different forms, including a freaky octopus woman if she's fighting underwater. Looks like an interesting and polished take on an overcrowded genre. ■

SOCOM: US NAVY SEALS

Go online and get shot with Zipper's squad-based battle sim.

■ Publisher: SCEE ■ Developer: Zipper Interactive ■ Out: TBC 2003

Launched to coincide with the release of the PS2 Network Adaptor in the States, this third-person squad-based military strategy shooter takes you through jungles, grasslands and tundras with 33 different weapons at your disposal. There are twelve single-player and twelve online missions, the latter allowing you to team up in eight vs eight shoot-outs in a variety of beautifully rendered locations filled with potholes and hidden vantage points from which to take out enemies. Gamers will be able to use the USB headset to shout at each other, and an online hub to get together with team mates and plan strategies. It's gone down a storm in the US. Just let us Brits at them. ■



METAL GEAR SOLID 2: SUBSTANCE

See more of Snake than you ever expected courtesy of Konami's mouth-watering stealth snack.

■ Publisher: Konami ■ Developer: Konami JPN
■ Out: March 2003

Remember when Konami released a special edition of the original PSone *Metal Gear Solid* with 200 odd 'VR Missions'? Well, Hideo Kojima and co are at it again. Having listened to the comments and complaints thrown at them by *Metal Gear* fans, the team has constructed a feature-packed new version of the game loaded with new gameplay treats. *MGS2: Substance* includes the full game itself, of course, along with another 200+ Virtual Missions which pit Snake and young whipper-snapper Raiden against a series of specific tactical challenges. There will also be around 100 Alternative Missions which re-cut various scenes and encounters from *MGS2* with different objectives and, most excitingly, new costumes! Plus, for gamers frustrated by the inexplicable lack of extreme sport action in the *MGS* series, there's even a Snake skateboarding level where the government operative will no doubt be required to perform gnarly stealth tricks. Okay, so this could be seen as an attempt to boost sales of *MGS2* a year after its release, and to get fanatics to buy the title again (like those 'Special Edition' CDs and DVDs), but the massive number of new missions more than justifies Konami's cunning tactic and will appeal to gamers who don't like hours of cut-scenes or who want to see more of Snake than they got in the original *MGS2*. ■



The 200 virtual missions take place in simplified, computer-generated landscapes.



WORLD RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP 2

SCEE's ace offroad sim gets a tune-up.



The amazing vistas that delighted drivers in the original will be even more impressive here.

■ Publisher: SCEE ■ Developer: Evolution Studios
■ Out: November

Despite an overabundance of competition, *WRC* is still the benchmark PS2 rally game boasting licensed teams, cars and events, and those staggeringly expansive and beautiful environments. With *WRC2*, the developers are aiming for even more impressive and realistic locales, with around three times as many trackside objects and much longer courses. Expect intensely detailed scenery filled with country-specific buildings and landmarks. Gameplay-wise, all seven of the 2002 WRC motors are present and accurately modelled, and these will be driven through 124 stages across 14 countries. Handling has been improved, of course, with more noticeable reactions to road surface conditions, but novices needn't be worried – a comprehensive tutorial mode is on hand to guide you through the rallying basics. With *Colin McRae 3* now revved up to give *WRC2* a real run for its offroad credentials, Evolution has to get this sequel just right to retain that benchmark status. It's going to be a photo-finish. ■

RED FACTION 2

Get your ass back to Mars.

■ Publisher: THQ ■ Developer: Volition
■ Out: November

Set five years after the original red planet revolt FPS, *Red Faction 2* puts you in control of cybersoldier Alias who, with five comrades, joins the Red Faction movement to rebel against the planet's evil dictator, Chancellor Sopot. As a squad of six, you blast through a puzzle-packed landscape using stealth as well as raw firepower. Key features include 14 hideously dangerous weapons, four driveable vehicles and loads of cool gadgets. The Geo-Mod technology – which lets you blow up walls to get into new areas – has been updated too, allowing even larger, messier explosions. Naturally, the game comes complete with four-player Deathmatch fun. Up the revolution. ■



Grenades picked up

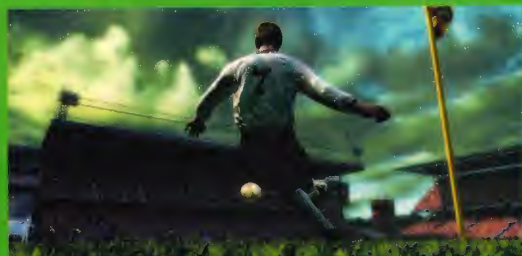
WOLVERINE'S REVENGE

Sideburns like lambchops. Fists of blades. It's the main X-Man.

■ Publisher: Activision ■ Developer: Genepool
■ Out: Spring 2003

The coolest character in the X-Men gets his own 3D adventure, built around eight dark, detailed levels filled with AI-clever enemies, fiendish puzzles and, naturally, acrobatic knife-handed combat. The sideburn-sporting hero gets a range of special moves, but he can also pick up baddies and use them as weapons. There are even areas where he'll get the chance to remotely control robots and gun emplacements. As for the story, it involves Wolverine hunting down the shady science research lab – Department H – that augmented his skeleton with adamantium. Can this reach the heady heights of *Spider-Man* on PSone? We'll keep our spiky-bladed fingers crossed. ■





PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 2

The best footy game ever is getting better.

■ Publisher: Konami ■ Developer: Konami TYO
■ Out: November

You knew of course that Konami wouldn't settle for near-perfection. *Pro Evolution* was never going to be the end of the series. Amazingly, every area has been strengthened for the sequel. There are more teams (Celtic, Rangers, Galatasaray), more stadiums (Old Trafford, Stadio Delle Alpi) and much improved commentary, thanks to the introduction of super-subs Trevor Brooking and Peter Brackley. Most importantly, there are 105% more animations in PES2, so player interaction with the ball is approaching photo-realism. This broadens the range of possible moves, allowing you to, say, half-turn, guard a ball and drag it past a defender in one graceful pirouette. Individual player styles are also much more accurate, with world class strikers like Van Nistelrooy and Ronaldo belting missiles into the top-corners at will, while defenders and Emile Heskey scuff shots like gormless donkeys. In the background, Konami is beefing up the experience with some new options. The Umbro Pro Training Centre, for example, is an innovative training mode providing a series of challenges to improve your skills in key areas. Add new, clearer presentation and some sexy europop music and you get another absolutely unmissable Konami footy title. The FIFA series is now so far behind they should sack its manager and put Big Ron in charge. ■



Player ratings have been updated. England is a much better team now.



Beckham's free kick style is perfectly replicated in the player animation.

TRUE CRIME

Driver, GTA and The Getaway meet in a menage et trois of death!

■ Publisher: Activision
■ Developer: Luxoflux ■ Out: 2003

For this blistering GTA-alike, Luxoflux has modelled 400 square miles of LA, providing the perfect backdrop to an unashamedly cinematic thriller. You play 'uncompromising' (i.e. psychotic) ex-cop Nick Kang on a massive quest to remove Russian and Chinese gangs from the city streets. There are 20 missions and 100 sub-missions taking in both driving sections and on-foot chases, with a little Jet Li-style hand-to-hand combat thrown in for good measure. And while you're not taking out foreign scum, you can wander the streets of LA buying equipment and getting your car upgraded. *True Crime* has its work cut out to take down GTA, but its finger is well and truly on the trigger. ■



APE ESCAPE 2

The pugnacious primates are back for more monkey magic.

■ Publisher: SCEI ■ Developer: SCEI
■ Out: February 2003

Picking up where *Ape Escape* on PSone left off, AE2 once again pits young Spike and his tiny monkey friend against an evil army of apes determined to take over the world. Using the left analogue stick to move and the right to swipe at baddies, you scamper through gorgeous cartoon worlds catching hairy enemies with cool weapons such as light sabres, boomerangs, a sling shot and a remote-controlled car that runs over monkey feet. The locations, graphics and gadgets are all new and improved and there's even a few mini-games, including Monkey Football. Genius. ■



Occasionally, Gandalf will aid in the fighting. He's not helping much here, though.



THE LORD OF THE RINGS: THE TWO TOWERS

The epic Tolkien movie gets a thunderous videogame makeover.

■ Publisher: EA ■ Developer: Stormfront
■ Out: December

Another month, another major film tie-in. But gamers dreading some kind of ponderous, ill-conceived, puzzle-filled adventure will be thrilled to discover that this is, in fact, a full-bodied third-person hack 'n slash taking in beautifully recreated scenes from the first two films. But, at the same time, it's no shallow sword-ern-up. Stormfront has built a complex, strategy-filled fighting system with multiple long and short range weapons, and colossal battle fields filled

with orcs, elves and soldiers all clubbing the hell out of each other around you. Players get the choice between three tactically diverse characters at the beginning of each level: Aragorn, Legolas and Gimli (who you select has a marked effect on the combat). You also get to encounter and fight alongside the likes of Gandalf and Frodo. There are 13 levels planned at the moment, all adopting the scenery and visual style of the movies. According to Stormfront, Peter Jackson's production company has been heavily involved in the development process so expect a game that does full justice to the Kiwi director's vision. ■

STAR WARS: BOUNTY HUNTER

Boba Fett's dad in 'hugely promising *Star Wars* game' shocker.

Jango can use his jet-pack and shoot at the same time, making for thrilling mid-air fights.



■ Publisher: Activision ■ Developer: LucasArts ■ Out: October

During *Episode II*, Jango Fett is almost as cool as his adult son in *The Empire Strikes Back* Right until the moment he's decapitated by Mace Windu. Now you get to be Jango (pre-beheading!) in a major new title designed in conjunction with Skywalker sound and Industrial Light and Magic. Your mission is to track down Komari Vosa, the leader of a renegade religious cult, and bring him back to Count Dooku dead or alive. This involves blasting and jet-packing through 16 levels, ranging from the crowded city streets of Coruscant to the isolated farmlands of Tatooine. Along the way you get to track down random low-lives in a series of bounty hunting sub-missions, using trademark Fett gadgets such as the rocket launcher, poison darts, flame thrower and dual pistols. Helping you is Zam Wesell the shape-shifting assassin from *Episode II*. You also have a rival in the shape of Montross, a ruthless bounty hunter/killer who enjoys slaughtering his targets. To fill in the background, LucasArts is promising a massive cast of at least 100 different *Star Wars* characters and species. The success of the game will rely on how well Jango controls and how detailed and interesting the missions and locations are. But let's face it, with a Fett involved what could possibly go wrong? ■

STAR WARS: THE CLONE WARS

Sign up for the Old Republic in this major battle strategy tie-in.

■ Publisher: Activision ■ Developer: Pandemic ■ Out: November

Accompanying the more glamorous *Bounty Hunter* is this promising military strategy shooter from Pandemic. Set around a series of 16 Clone War skirmishes, you pilot various craft into battle, sending out orders to Republic soldiers and getting stuck into the carnage. Weapons include long-range mortars, blasters and seismic charges and you'll visit various planets from the *Star Wars* universe, including Chewbacca's homeworld. Expect a combination of full-on shooting with stealth elements as you creep behind enemy lines like a mischievous Ewok. ■



THE SIMS

The smash hit interactive soap opera comes to PS2.

■ Publisher: EA ■ Developer: EA ■ Out: November



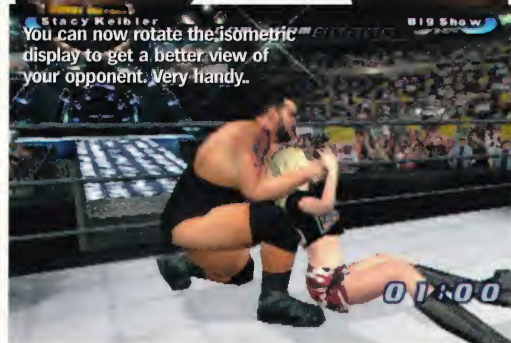
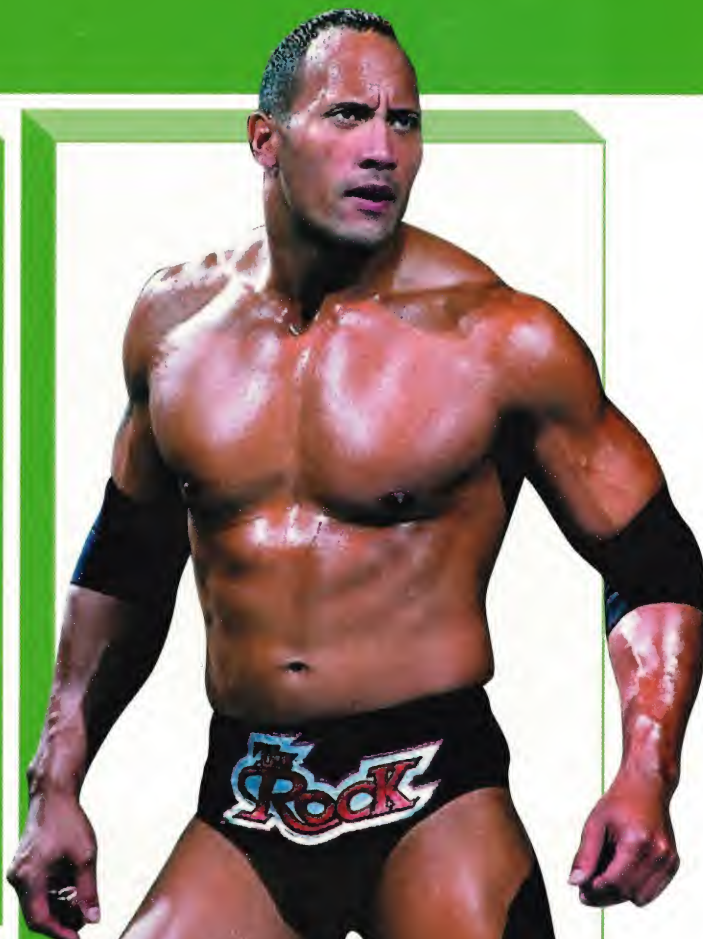
Strangely, the most successful PC game ever isn't an ultra-violent FPS. It's a game in which you control emotional little people who work, play, laugh and occasionally interact in hot tubs. The forthcoming PS2 version has several changes to the original. EA reckons console gamers are more 'goal-orientated' so the developers are adding a level structure: you start in a flea pit house in Nowhere village and have to work your way up to a babe-filled mansion. There's also a new two-player mode, and the visuals are in luscious 3D. Your social life is history. ■

SHOX

EA Sports BIG takes rally racing to the EXTREME!

■ Publisher: EA ■ Developer: EA Sports BIG ■ Out: Autumn

Having revolutionised the snowboarding genre with its groovy SSX series, EA Sports BIG is moving into the staid and over-serious rally sector. Shox, looks back to the classic coin-op *Sega Rally* for inspiration, boasting knockabout handling, super brash visuals and the chance to gamble cash for new cars. Abandoning the current vogue for realistic driving against the clock, Shox is a traditional racer with six cars going bumper to bumper. There are also arcade-style checkpoints and speed mega power-ups. It's rallying, but not as Colin McRae knows it. ■



WWE SMACKDOWN! 'SHUT YOUR MOUTH!'

It's time to smackdown more suckers.

■ Publisher: THQ ■ Developer: Yuke's ■ Out: November

After the improbably named *WWF SmackDown! Just Bring It!* comes the latest in Yuke's muscular wrestle-'em-up series. 'Shut Your Mouth!' features around 60 grapplers and a million wrestling modes (slight exaggeration, perhaps), including the new Season option which begins with a NFL-style 'draft' system and takes you through a whole year in a wrestler's sweaty life with loads of character specific story lines and scenarios. This mode also includes new 'Superstar points' which you pick up by winning tournaments allowing you to enter higher profile events (you can also unlock characters, arenas and moves). The developers have also added a long-lusted-after six-player tag mode, so that you and five friends can clamber into the ring together in an orgy of grapple violence.

Most obvious though is the visual overhaul. Since *Just Bring It!*, Yuke's has vastly improved the character modelling and given a lick of digital paint to the flashy arenas. Interaction between the fighters also looks more solid with none of that 'arm disappears into torso' tomfoolery you often get from 3D beat-'em-ups. As for the combat system, moves are now much more context sensitive and can often be accessed with one button tap and a direction. Sadly, there is still no The Rock-style 'make terrible movie' mode. They're probably saving that for *WWE SmackDown! 'Smell My Thong!* ■



The name of your character is displayed over his/her head so pals can spot you easily.



There are five different races in the game, including these cute little dwarves.

FINAL FANTASY XI

Square unleashes the world's first massively multiplayer console adventure. Welcome to the future.

■ Publisher: SCEE ■ Developer: Square
■ Out: TBC 2003

For several years PC owners have been able to go online and play fantasy RPGs against thousands of other players in 'sustained' online worlds. Soon, Square will launch its console answer to the likes of *Everquest* and *Ultima Online*, set on the planet of Vana'Diel where a race of monsters is terrorising the inhabitants of three different countries. When gamers go online

they will get to create their own unique characters, choosing from six different races and a range of clothes and hairstyles, and then join guilds with five other players. When a large enemy needs a good kicking, multiple guilds will be able to join together creating an impressive army. Combat employs a semi-real time system with a scrolling, branching menu system – and of course there will be magic and multiple weapons. To communicate with other people you'll need to buy a USB keyboard, and as with PC online RPGs, you'll be able to whisper to members of your own clan or

shout to everyone in the vicinity, allowing duplicitous planning and strategy making.

Beta tests held in Japan earlier this year yielded mixed responses from gaming lab rats, with some complaining about the 'washed out' visuals and the disappointingly low number of character customisation options. However, Square has had plenty of time to tweak these aspects of the design and if anyone can make this work it's them. Visuals aside, this could well be one of the most important games in console history. ■

HARRY POTTER AND THE CHAMBER OF SECRETS

The student wizard returns with more PS2 tricks up his sleeves.

■ Publisher: EA ■ Developer: EA UK (Chertsey Studio)
■ Out: 19 November

Based on the forthcoming film adaptation of the best-selling second Potter book, *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* features Specky Four Eyes and his pals in a third-person action adventure, taking in spell-casting battles against possessed washing machines and Quidditch playing. EA is also promising plenty of characters and locations from the book, as well as lots of new spells. The visuals are looking quite impressive with a warm cartoon style. No doubt children are the target audience, but there may be enough charm here to tempt adult fans. ■



JAMES BOND 007: NIGHTFIRE

New story, new face and a bevy of new babes...



■ Publisher: EA ■ Developer: Eurocom
■ Out: November

As with *Agent Under Fire*, *Nightfire* boasts an exclusive new Bond story, although this time the developer is cramming in a few classic set-pieces (and maybe some favourite characters) from the movies. Once again, gameplay takes in first-person shooting, a little stealth and a smattering of hi-tech gadgets, as well as some vehicle driving stages. There will also be a few third-person sections to aid in those tricky sneaking about moments. Visuals look sharper and more detailed than ever (Pierce Brosnan is lending his face to Bond) and the girls are as sexy as hell. ■



AUTO MODELLISTA

Cel-shaded car chaos from Capcom.

■ Publisher: Capcom Eurosoft ■ Developer: Capcom
■ Out: December

Trust Capcom. For the company's first driving game they couldn't just bash out a standard rally or F1 wannabe. Instead, they took the currently in-vogue cel-shading technique and used it to craft an intense anime-style street racer with ten circuits and hugely customisable licensed cars, with the likes of the Nissan Skyline, Honda Civic type R and Lancer Evolution turning up as usual. To make the most of the pop culture visuals (effects like lens flare are super enhanced to give it that explosive Japanese cartoon look) there's a VJ mode which allows you to edit replays and overload them with cool graphics. Network support is also planned, allowing players to set up online teams and tournaments, or just show-off with their customised motors – unfortunately Capcom is still unsure whether this feature will be available in Europe. Early reports from E3 suggested that the handling was a little slack and unchallenging, but this has been tweaked and now screeching through the neon-stained streets of Tokyo represents a considerable challenge. For those tired of hum-drum 'realistic' racers this is surely near the top of your motorsport 'must-have' list. ■



SPLINTER CELL

Anti-terrorist action from the master of covert-ops fiction.

■ Publisher: Ubi Soft ■ Developer: Ubi Soft Montreal
■ Out: Early 2003

This game is just so zeitgeist it's untrue. Not only is it a third-person anti-terrorist stealth adventure with a myriad of gadgets (there are a dozen of these due in the next six months), it's also based on a Tom Clancy book – another massive fad. You play crack NSA operative Sam Fisher as he infiltrates a series of enemy strongholds, taking down guards and stealing critical data. Typically you have to avoid security cameras, watchdogs, etc, using tactical awareness as well as bullets. Visuals are suitably dark and moody. Stealth fans: have your thermal goggles ready. ■

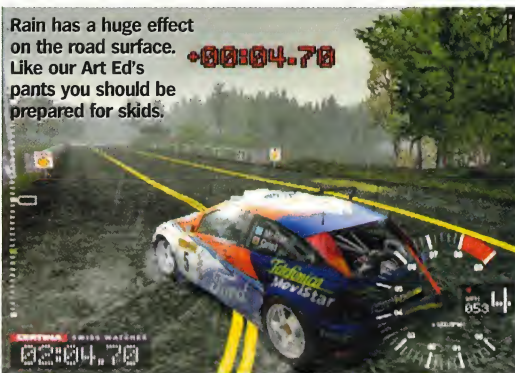




COLIN MCRAE RALLY 3

Radical rally from the kings of the offroad.

Rain has a huge effect on the road surface. Like our Art Ed's pants you should be prepared for skids.



■ Publisher: Codemasters ■ Developer: Codemasters
■ Out: October

Despite stiff competition from SCE's *World Rally Championship 2*, deep down the latest *Colin McRae* is the rally sim we've all been waiting for. Featuring incredible weather effects (snow and rain that dribbles across the windscreen as the wipers smear away), stunningly detailed, damage-vulnerable cars and 56 beautifully rendered locations, this second sequel certainly looks the part. But, more importantly, beneath the graphical bonnet revs one of the most enjoyable driving engines ever burnt to CD. Skid round corners and feel the back end slide away, sending plumes of dust or great splodges of mud (depending on where you are – there are eight countries in the game) flying all around. Feel the jar of grinding suspension as your Lancer EVO hits a pothole at 80mph. This time round, there's also an in-depth Ford Rallye Sport mode where you ARE Colin, speeding through three WRC seasons. Add a few classic cars to the mix and you have another essential Codemasters racer. ■

KINGDOM HEARTS

Disney meets *Final Fantasy* in the RPG collision of the decade.

■ Publisher: SCE ■ Developer: Square
■ Out: November 2002

The combination of *Final Fantasy* with Mickey Mouse sounds like the stuff of surreal nightmare, but Square might just pull it off. You play Sora a young hero who must travel through nine themed islands looking for his friends who went missing during a violent storm. Meanwhile, King Mickey has disappeared from Castle Disney and Donald and Goofy join Sora to look for him. Gameplay is more action orientated than *Final Fantasy* with a cut down combat system. Expect a heart-warming adventure experience that isn't necessarily just for kids. ■



FORMULA ONE 2002

The biggest license in racing is back on the starting grid.



■ Publisher: SCE ■ Developer: Studio Liverpool
■ Out: October

Studio Liverpool's *Formula One 2001* was widely considered the best F1 title on PS2 – even if the framerate juddered at times and there was no mid-game save function. The team is working on eradicating these failings as well as giving the game a visual overhaul with more detailed car models and better background detail (while maintaining a healthy 50fps framerate). There's also motion captured pit-stop and pre-race action, realistic driver models and new Arcade and Time Trial modes. Looks to be as sturdy as a Schumacher championship challenge. ■

MORTAL KOMBAT DEADLY ALLIANCE

The most controversial fighter of all time returns to the ring.

■ Publisher: Midway ■ Developer: Midway
■ Out: December

Back in the early Nineties the *Mortal Kombat* series thrilled violence fans with its digitised visuals and gory finishing moves. Now it's back with original designer Ed Boon at the helm. At least ten classic, but radically re-designed, fighters will return alongside newcomers, including a female Sub-Zero. Each has multiple fighting styles and weapons, but the number of special moves has been reduced to create a less gimmicky combat experience. This is essentially *Mortal Kombat* returned to its dark, demonic roots, but with stunning 3D visuals. Blood will flow like wine. ■



SILENT HILL 3

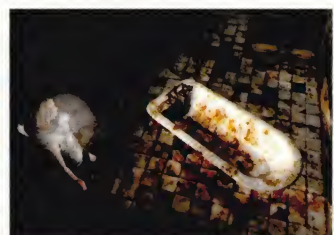
More survival horror in the most sinister town since Royston Vasey.



The metal pipe is low-tech but effective against over-friendly hell hounds.

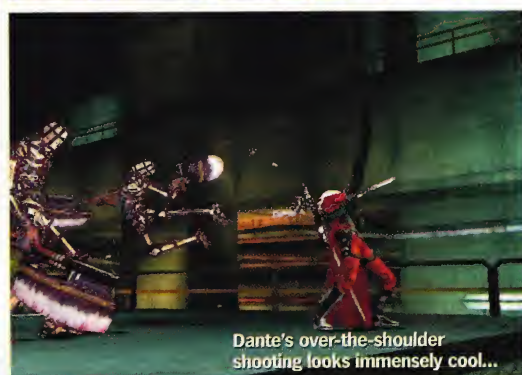
■ Publisher: Konami ■ Developer: Konami JPN ■ Out: TBC 2003

Perhaps inspired by George Romero's *Dawn of the Dead* or Eighties slasher flick *Chopping Mall*, Konami has chosen to base the latest edition of its sick horror series in a shopping arcade filled with ravenous zombie monsters. In the title role this time is Heather, a teenage girl who finds herself fighting off limping hell fiends when what she really wants to do is normal girl things like hanging about outside McDonalds looking surly and flirting awkwardly with spotty monosyllabic boys while furiously texting friends on a Hello Kitty-themed mobile. Typically, for the average teen tart, Heather can pick up and use a variety of weapons including sub-machine guns, pistols and a steel pipe. Konami is not revealing too much about the story but an early demo shows Heather gingerly wandering down dark, blood-stained corridors and into an underground train station where she's set upon by giant rotting beasts. Expect all the usual *Silent Hill* stuff like horrible clanging and scraping noises, and bizarre conversations with listless, staring characters who say things like 'there's something wrong with this place, I think' while standing in a room covered with blood-smeared hand prints and containing nothing but a bath filled with human offal. Absolutely unmissable, in other words. ■

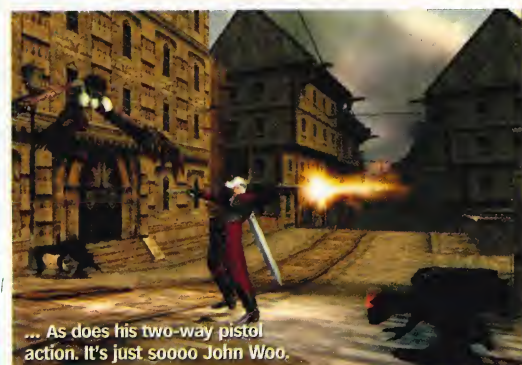




Character design and animation is even more detailed.



Dante's over-the-shoulder shooting looks immensely cool...



... As does his two-way pistol action. It's just soooo John Woo.

DEVIL MAY CRY 2

Dante is back and this time he's brought his ladyfriend.

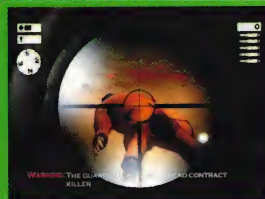
■ Publisher: Capcom Eurosoft ■ Developer: Capcom
■ Out: Spring 2003

The original *Devil May Cry* was a fantastically atmospheric gothic adventure combining *Resident Evil*'s exploration and plotting with more action-orientated gameplay. I.e. a lot of sword-swirling fights. The sequel looks set to offer more of the same, but in a huge new city location (double the size of the castle in the original) filled with gigantic dragons, rock monsters and laser-shooting giants. In a new twist, gamers will also be able to choose between two playable characters at the beginning. Dante, the half-demon star of the original, and a fleshy new female, Lucia. The main game will be the same, but each character has their own side-missions, so there will be plenty of replay value when you've got through it once. Where Dante can climb walls, jump really high and shoot people from a distance, Lucia takes a straightforward close combat approach infused with martial arts techniques. Dante also has some super-cool new fighting moves, including shooting over his shoulder. Apparently, only one veteran from the original DMC development team is working on the sequel, but as he's joined by ex-*Resident Evil* and *Onimusha* staff, expect another dose of goth brilliance. ■



HITMAN 2: SILENT ASSASSIN

It's time to make an absolute killing...



■ Publisher: Eidos ■ Developer: Io Interactive
■ Out: October

Blackmailed out of retirement by mobsters, top assassin Agent 47 is back infiltrating criminal hang-outs and blagging the designated targets. Unlike the PC original, here you get to disguise yourself as enemy personnel, and smuggle weapons in and out of sensitive areas, hiding them in boxes. The extensive selection of weapons will tempt trigger happy gamers, but *Hitman 2* is as much about stealth and finding the right way into the latest mafia lair. With detailed worldwide locations and an open-ended tactical structure, *Hitman 2* is surely not going to miss. ■

BROKEN SWORD: SLEEPING DRAGON

More stylish cartoon adventure shenanigans from Revolution.

■ Publisher: SCE ■ Developer: Revolution
■ Out: December 2003

The first two *Broken Sword* titles on PC and PSone were very traditional 2D 'point and click' adventures with finely-detailed cartoon visuals. For the PS2 rendition, the series is going 3D, without sacrificing that continental comic book look. Lead character George Stobbart can now jump and shimmy and there are lavish cut-scenes to keep the story – concerning the Knights Templar and a plot to take over the world – moving. The control method apparently adopts a superbly user-friendly new mechanism. You'll get your hands on it next year. ■



ZOE: THE SECOND RUNNER

The makers of *Metal Gear* go robot bonkers. Again.



■ Publisher: Konami ■ Developer: JPN Studio
■ Out: TBC 2003

The original *Zone of the Enders*, a mech battle game based in a 22nd Century space colony, was a graphically impressive, but ultimately shallow, robot romp. The sequel, which involves a war between Mars and Earth, features battles between hundreds of droids (rather than one-on-one fights), new weapons and a new teleport ability. The visuals have a sharp, anime look with a proprietary cel-shading technique adding stylised definition to the hot metal action. Hideo Kojima is also promising a longer, more scenically varied challenge. Robots rock. ■

TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 4

The king of skateboarding is back and he's ready to grind ya.



Animation has been massively upgraded, allowing better mid-air positioning.



The new locations rock. Anyone for skateboard tennis?

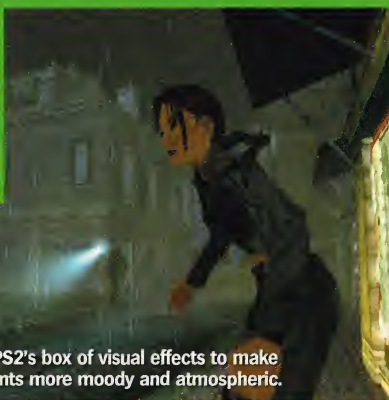
■ Publisher: Activision ■ Developer: Neversoft ■ Out: Winter

With each new instalment of the masterful *Tony Hawk's* series you think they can't make it any better. And then they do. The main change here is subtle, but important. The game now starts in a kind of freestyle mode, where you can explore the environments with complete freedom. The timer only kicks in when you talk to one of the many characters hanging about the place and accept one of their challenges. These can involve performing radical moves for a photographer, collecting the letters C-O-M-B-O in a single combo or racing to warn other skaters about incoming security men. There are also mini-games where Tony can play tennis (with his skateboard as a racquet) and, unfortunately for him, American football. Finally, as you skate around each location, you'll also be challenged by rival skaters. If you beat their score, you open up new ramps.

Two significant weapons have been added to your arsenal of trickery. First up, you can now trick off moving objects, be they cars or carnival floats. Then there's a new spine transfer move which lets you jump from one bowl to another without ending your combo chain in a big mess of broken limbs. And, naturally, the visuals have been massively upgraded, the locations made bigger and more interactive than ever. Radical. ■



Core is using PS2's box of visual effects to make the environments more moody and atmospheric.



As a murder suspect, Lara must avoid the attentions of the local police.

LARA CROFT TOMB RAIDER: THE ANGEL OF DARKNESS

Oh the glamour, the guns, the girl. Lara goes dark and dirty in her latest quest.

■ Publisher: Eidos ■ Developer: Core Design
■ Out: 15 November

Finally, she's back. Core gave its heroine a year off so the team could drastically re-think the *Tomb Raider* gameplay. The result is a darker, edgier adventure with Lara on the run in Paris having been framed for the murder of rival raider Von Croy. While hanging about in the catacombs beneath the Louvre she encounters Kurtis Trent, an acrobatic occultist looking to avenge the murder of his father. The two team up on their respective quests (Ms Croft wants to clear her name and get les gendarmes

of her ass), and you even get to play as Kent two-thirds of the way through. The big new addition to the gameplay is a sort of progressive skills system. As Lara takes large jumps or climbs drainpipes, she trains and strengthens her body, thereby making bigger jumps and higher climbs possible. You can then access new game areas.

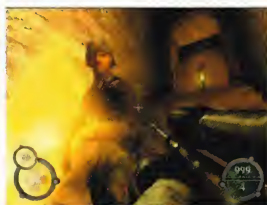
Core is promising a fresh start after a series of *Tomb Raider* sequels that diminished in quality with each successive instalment. Looking at the detailed environments and interesting 'body training' dynamic this could well be more than mere marketing puff. Whatever the case, this is just the beginning of the lady's new life. Lara stalkers rejoice. ■

RETURN TO CASTLE WOLFENSTEIN

The granddaddy of the first-person shooter invades PS2. Achtung!

■ Publisher: Activision ■ Developer: Raster Productions
■ Out: TBC 2003

Ten years ago, Id changed the face of gaming with its original FPS, the Nazi castle romp, *Wolfenstein*. Last year's PC sequel was a mega hit so a conversion to PS2 was as inevitable as the imminent Nazi goosestepping joke. So, in the goosestep over to console, the control system has been modified and auto-aim added. Other than that it's extraordinarily atmospheric and visually stunning business as usual. Raid the castle, shoot the Nazi zombies, creep about a bit and get out. Multiplayer options are unconfirmed, but anticipated with bated breath. ■



RATCHET AND CLANK

Bored space kid. Droid. Evil empire. It can only be... er, *Star Wars*?

■ Publisher: SCEE ■ Developer: Insomniac
■ Out: November

From the makers of *Spyro the Dragon* comes this similarly cute platformer/shooter/arcade adventure following bored young kid Ratchet and multi-purpose robot Clank on a quest to destroy an evil empire looking to take over the galaxy. There are 35 innovative and amusing weapons and gadgets to buy along the way (Suck Cannon, anyone?), 18 massive worlds to explore and a mighty cast of ridiculous aliens to blast. For fans of the recent, and similarly ambitious, *Jak and Daxter*, this clearly *Star Wars*-inspired romp could be a must-have. ■



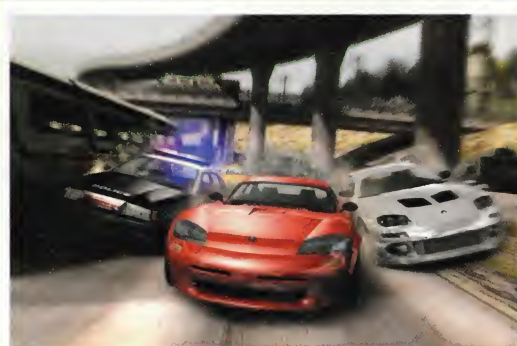
RED DEAD REVOLVER

Saddle up, there's a new shoot-'em-up sheriff in town.

■ Publisher: Capcom ■ Developer: Angel Studios
■ Out: December



Cowboy games have been inexplicably scarce in recent years so it's a relief to see Angel Studios' gunslinging third-person action adventure mosey on up to the release schedule. You play Red, a mysterious gunfighter looking to avenge the murder of his family by desperados many years ago. Action takes in hand-to-hand saloon brawls as well as horse-back combat, and you get a range of weapons including shotguns, pistols, throwing knives and dynamite. Add to this a four-player deathmatch option and this is the most essential western experience since *Unforgiven*. ■



BURNOUT 2: POINT OF IMPACT

The rock star of racing games is back.

The new Pursuit mode adds a Driver Vibe.



■ Publisher: Acclaim ■ Developer: Criterion
■ Out: October

Usually, driving games tut sniffily when you get too close to other cars, but Criterion's boy racer speedfest *Burnout* actually rewarded you with a hot spurt of nitrous oxide. *Burnout 2* promises more of the same, but in a more accessible framework. Now the slightest scrapes won't send you spinning off the road; the boost function is powered up after only a couple of close shaves; AND the single-player mode has been made a little easier so more drivers get to those final levels. On top of this, the handling has been refined to offer a more complex drive, and a few new modes have cropped up, including a Pursuit option where you belt around in a cop car swatting crooks off the tarmac like motorised flies.

As you'd expect, there has also been a major visual overhaul. The varied car models are as smooth and curved as Kylie's bum cheeks and the crash replays are sheer auto wreck porn. One thing's for sure: we need unashamed arcade fare like this to counter all those po-faced sims. ■

SCeI inadvertently announced *ICO 2* to the world when it advertised for staff to work on the project in a Japanese game magazine. Judging by the art

■ Publisher: SCE ■ Developer: SCE

ICO 2

quests. SCE wants to provide worldwide servers for part-global gaming.

The scary successful, massively multiplayer RPG which has had PC gamers

■ Publisher: Sony Online Entertainment (SOE) ■ Developer: SOE

EVERQUEST ONLINE ADVENTURES

system and massive advances in terms of visuals and sheer scale.

Expected in late 2003, the latest instalment in the real driving simulator

■ Publisher: SCE ■ Developer: Polyphony Digital

GRAN TURISMO 4

real-time 3D, a la *Code: Veronica*. Don't expect to see it until late 2003.

Revealed in video form at this year's E3 show, *Resident Evil Online* is

■ Publisher: Capcom Eurosoft ■ Developer: Capcom

RESIDENT EVIL ONLINE

multiplayer modes.

■ Publisher: EA

MEDAL OF HONOR: FIGHTER COMMAND

by the end of 2002.

In this promising FPS you control a

■ Publisher: EA

ALIENS: COLONIAL MARINES

compete with GVA3 and *The Getaway*.

Expect vastly improved vehicle modelling

■ Developer: Reflections

DRIVER 3

gameplay and plot twists aplenty.

■ Publisher: Eidos

DEUS EX 2

Sequel to the futuristic PC adventure

■ Publisher: Ion Storm

HARDWARE ONLINE

Developed using the *Dropship* engine.

■ Publisher: SCE

LANDING IN 2003

Recently announced sequels, delayed movie tie-ins and online treats that

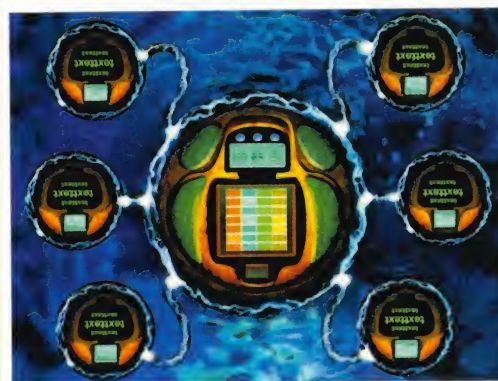


■ Publisher: Activision ■ Developer: K2

TENCHU 3: WRATH OF HEAVEN

The original martial arts stealth adventure sneaks up behind you.

A smash hit on PSone, the *Tenchu* series of dark ninja adventures was one of first to use stealth as a major gameplay component. *Tenchu 3* offers two playable characters – Rikimaru and Ayame (weaker but more athletic) – each with their own finishing moves. Most combat is via sword, but you also get poison and bombs with which to dispatch foe, as well as a grappling hook to climb with. Visuals are highly detailed with well-replicated traditional Japanese architecture and gorgeous atmospheric lighting. Character animation is said to be excellent, rendering the precise, fluid movements of the ninja assassin with aplomb.



Jester Interactive's MTV *Music 3* Generator 2 is an awesomely powerful tune creation tool which lets you use thousands of samples to construct gangsta' tunes. Now the team has added even more aural power to its creative series. *Music 3* lets you add reverb, chorus and delay effects to the pre-set samples, giving much more individuality to your tracks. You'll also be able to sample your own CDs and use a new mic peripheral which lets you hum in a tune then turn it into a riff – a truly marvelous innovation. Plus, the whole presentation of the music-making game has been made totally customisable for your sonic comfort. Bo selecta.

■ Publisher: Jester ■ Developer: Jester ■ Out: Early 2003

MUSIC 3

Be the next Moby – or someone good – with Jester's pop sim.



■ Publisher: SCE ■ Developer: Team SoHo

THE GETAWAY

The gangland shooter that redefines the term 'long-awaited'.

Work started on Team SoHo's massively ambitious gangster adventure in 1999 and after a couple of false starts it appears the developers are finally approaching the closing straight. You play as ex-con Mark Hammond who's going straight until gang boss Charlie Johnson kidnaps his son and hit-and-run gangland missions. These involve a combination of high-speed driving and third-person walking sections, with a mix of stealth and gun-ho guns-out gameplay. There are dozens of licensed vehicles rolling around the minutely detailed London streets (70 square miles of the capitol have been faithfully reproduced), and loads of characters to interact with. Plus, later in the game, you get to control cop Frank Carter as he clamps down on the various trades, yardies and East End villains that litter his manor. The *Getaway* has been more hyped than the second coming, but judging by the screenshots, and the sheer amount of time the development team have been tweaking the code, it may yet live up to its rep.

Piccadilly Circus is just one of the recognisable London landmarks used in the game.

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YEARBOOK 2002

It's the end of another triumphant year for PS2 which has seen sales soaring and more great games hitting the shelves than you can shake a joypad at. Next issue we analyse the momentous events of 2002 in the **Official PlayStation 2 Special Edition: Yearbook 2002**, your one-stop guide to all this:

- Games Of The Year – Metal Gear Solid 2, Grand Theft Auto: Vice City, TimeSplitters 2, Pro Evolution Soccer 2, The Getaway, Final Fantasy X and all the other smash hits released in 2002.
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Army Men Air Attack
Army Men Green Rogue
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B = 02
Baldur's Gate: Dark All.
Bass Strike
Batman Vengeance
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BIG: SSX Snowboarding
BIG: SSX Tricky
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Blood Omen 2
Bloody Roar 3
Bombad Racing
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C = 03
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C-12 Final Resistance
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Crazy Taxi
Cricket 2002
Cyprien's Chronicles

D = 04
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Dark Cloud
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Deus-Ex
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Donald Duck: Quack All.

Downforce
Dracula Last Sanctuary
Draken: Ancient Gates
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Driver 2
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Dropship
Drum Mania
Dynasty Warriors 2
Dynasty Warriors 3

E = 05
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Eden, Project
Eighteen Wheeler
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Emotion Type-S (Driving)
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Extreme G 3
Extreme Racer

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FIFA 2002
FIFA World Cup 2002
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Four by Four Evolution
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Fur Fighters

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Gundam: J to Jaburo

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Heroes of Might & Magic
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ISS Pro Evolution
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J. Moseley's Mad Trix
J.Bond: Agent Under Fire
Jade Cocoon 2
Jak & Daxter
Jedi Star Fighter
Jekyll & Hyde
Jikkyou World Soccer '00
Jikkyou World Soccer '01
Jojo's Bizarre Adventure 2
Just Bring It

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Klonoa 2
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Knockout Kings 2002

L = 12
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Mummy Returns
MX 2002
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Nascar Heat 2002
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NHL 2001
NHL 2002
NHL Hit 2002
No-One Lives Forever

O = 15
Off Road Fury
Off Road Wide Open
Okage: Shadow King
Oni
Onimusha 2
Onimusha: Warlords
OO7 Agent Under Fire
Operation Winback
Operative (N.O.L.F.)
Orphen

P = 16
Pac-Man World 2
Parappa the Rapper 2
Parasite Eve 2
Paris-Dakar Rally
Penny Racers
Pirates: Leg. of Black Kat
Player Manager 2001
Player Manager 2002
Polaroid Pete
Police 24/7
Pool Master: Q-Ball
Portal Runner
Prisoner of War
Pro Evolution Soccer
Pro Evolution Soccer 2
Pro Rally 2002
Project Eden
Project Zero

Q = 17
Q-Ball: Billiards Master
Quack Attack
Quake 3 Revolution
Quest for Dragon B. Staff

R = 18
R Carmichael's MX 2002
Racer Revenge
Raging Breath
Rayman 2
Rayman M
RC Revenge Pro
Ready 2 Rumble 2
Real Robot Regiment
Red Card Soccer 2003
Red Faction
Res. Evil Gun Survivor 2
Res.Evil: Code Veronica X
Return to C. Wolfenstein
Revolution: Quake 3
Rez

Ridge Racer 5
Ring of Red
Road Rage
Robot Wars
Romance of 3 Kingdom 7
Rumble Racing
Rune: Viking Warlord

S = 19
S Palmer's Snowboarder
Sarge's Heroes 2
Savage Skies
Scooby Doo: 100 Frights
Sega Sports Tennis 2K2
Seven Blades
Shadow Hearts
Shadow Man 2
Shadow of Memories
Shadow Of Zorro
Silent Hill
Silent Hill 2
Silent Scope
Silent Scope 2
Silpheed: Lost Planet
Simpsons: Road Rage
Sky Gunner
Sky Odyssey
Sky Surfer
Slam Tennis
Sled Storm
Smackdown! 3: J. Bring It
Smash Court Tennis
Smugglers Run
Smugglers Run 2
Soccer America: Int. Cup
SOCOM: US Navy Seals
Soldier of Fortune
Soul Reaver 2
Space Channel 5
Spiderman 2
Spiderman The Movie
Splashdown
Sprint Cars 2002
Spy Hunter
SSX - Snowboarding
SSX Tricky
Star Trek: Elite Force
Star Wars Jedi Starfighter
Star Wars: Racer Revenge
Star Wars: Starfighter
State of Emergency
Street Fighter Ex 3
Street Hoops
Street, NBA
Stuntman
Summoner
Sunny Garcia: Surfing
Super Bombad Racing
Super Bust A Move
Super Trucks
Supercar St. Challenge
Supercross World
Surfing H30
Swing Away Golf
Syphon Filter 3

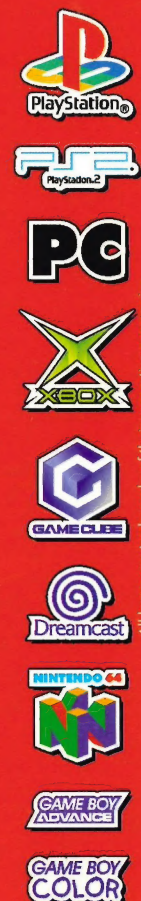
T = 20
T. Woods PGA Tour 2001
Tarzan Freeride
TD Overdrive
Tekken 4
Tekken Tag Tournament
Tennis 2K2
Test Drive
Test Drive: Wide Open
The Bouncer
The Legend of Black Kat
The Mark of Kri
The Mummy Returns
The New Nightmare
The Operative (N.O.L.F.)
The Simpsons: Road Rage

The Thing
The Weakest Link
The World is not Enough
Theme Park World
This is Football 2002
Throwdown: UFC
Thunderhawk: Op.
Tiger Woods Golf 2002
Time Crisis 2
Time Splitters
TOCA Race Driver
Tokyo Extreme Racer
Tomb Raider 4
Tomb Raider 5
Tony Hawk's 2
Tony Hawk's 3
Top Gear: Dare Devil
Top Gun: Combat Zones
Track and Field
Transworld Surf
Triple Play Baseball
Triple Play Baseball
Turok: Evolution
Twisted Metal Black
Type-S: Driving Emotion
U = 21
UEFA Champion League
Ulti.FChamp: Throwdown
Unreal Tournament
US Navy Seals (SOCOM)
V = 22
Vampire Apocalypse
Vampire Night
Victorious Boxers
Virtua Fighter 4
Virtua Tennis 2
Voyager Elite Force
V-Rally 3

W = 23
W Games Snowboarding
Wacky Races
Warlords (Onimusha)
Warriors of M & M
Way of the Samurai
WDL: War Jetz
Weakest Link
Wetrix 2
Who Wants 28A Million.2
Wild Wild Racing
Winback
Winning Eleven 6
Winter Sports 2002
Wipeout Fusion
World Cup 2002
World is not Enough
World Outlaws: S.Cars'02
Worms Blast
Wrath of Cortex
WRC: World Rally Champ
WW2: Prisoner of War
WWE Smackdown! J.B.I.
WWE Smackdown 3 J.B.I.

X = 24
X Games: Snowboarding
X Games: Skateboarding
X-Squad
Xtreme G3

Y = 25
Yanya Caballista: Skater
YuGiOh! Dual Monsters 2
Z = 26
Zeonic Front
Zone of the Enders
Zorro (Shadow Of)
0-9 = 27
007 Agent Under Fire
102 Dalmatians
18 Wheeler
2002 FIFA World Cup
4x4 Evolution



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